**What Does The Bible Say About Youth Ministry?**

**By CompellingTruth.org**

Does the Bible say anything about the role of youth pastor/minister? The New Testament does not specifically mention the role of a youth pastor or youth minister. Local church youth ministries began to increase in the mid-twentieth century as an extension of the popularity of parachurch ministries such as Youth for Christ that reaches large numbers of teenagers who needed further discipleship. However, much is said about ministry in general that applies to the efforts of youth workers.

First, there is the question of whether a youth leader is considered a youth pastor or youth minister. There is some importance to this difference. A youth pastor would biblically be an elder who would need to fit the elder qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These passages also limit pastoral ministry to men since New Testament elders were exclusively male. Seen as a youth minister, however, both men and women would have freedom to serve in this role, involving those with abilities in working with teenagers effectively.

Second, there is the important consideration of the goals of youth ministry. In general, the goal of youth ministry should be the same as that of the local church—to honor God through making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore, the focus of local church youth ministry is to be discipleship, a process that includes evangelism, learning, friendship, service, and worship (Acts 2:42-47).

Another consideration is the relationship between youth ministry and parents of teenagers in the church. The Bible clearly states the priority of raising a child belongs to parents (Ephesians 6:1-4). However, additional help through youth workers can assist parents to better help young people grow in Christ. In addition, many youth ministries include teenagers from broken families or families that include non-Christian parents. In these situations, the role of the youth worker becomes more important as he or she may be the only Christian role model in the young person's life.

Youth programs are another important consideration for youth pastors or ministers. There should ideally be room for both interaction with other age groups in the church (such as in weekly worship services) and gatherings specifically with teenagers to help address particular issues they face in relevant, helpful ways. Though youth ministry should include an element of fun, it is primarily about discipleship rather than entertainment. A balanced combination of outreach, growth, fellowship, and service can help impact teenagers and better prepare them for a lifetime of ministry.

First Timothy 4:12 offers a key verse that applies to working with young people: "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." A youth leader's goal is help young people set an example through their lives that follows the example of Christ.

Does the Bible say anything about youth ministry?

Youth ministry has become a common area of outreach and discipleship in modern churches. However, separate ministries for youth do not appear to have been common in the early churches of the New Testament. Instead, most church gatherings met in houses with entire families in less formal services than those of today.

Yet the Bible does say much that is important about ministering to teenagers. First Timothy 4:12 especially notes, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." Teenagers are to live by example as young followers of Jesus.

In addition, teenagers have many of the same spiritual needs as adults. These include the need to know Christ personally by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), to grow in understanding of God's truth (2 Timothy 3:16-17), to serve others, to enjoy friendships with other believers (Acts 2:42), and to learn how to share their faith with others.

The overall goal of youth ministry should resemble that of the church—a focus on honoring God through making disciples, or fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), and living out the Great Commandment, loving God and loving people (Matthew 22:37-40). For teenagers, mentoring can also play a large role in this process. The apostle Paul provided and taught this type of training with Timothy: "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Another biblical principle relevant to youth ministry can be found in 1 Corinthians 12. In this chapter, Paul compares believers in the church to different parts of a human body. Every part is important, and there is no part that is more important than another part. When teenagers are cared for and given ministry opportunities in the local church, they can grow as "part of the body" and feel like an essential part of God's work in the local church.

Finally, 1 Timothy 5 offers instructions for various groups of people in the local church. Verses 1-2 state, "Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity." Church leaders are to treat younger men as brothers and younger women as sisters. The youth of our church are our family members. They are not just another ministry, but are an essential part of our church family.

Youth ministry has grown into a more developed area of service in many of today's churches than in biblical times. However, the same biblical principles apply as with any area of ministry—making disciples, serving God and others, personal growth, living as part of the body of Christ, and being seen as an essential part of the family of God.

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This article may not be written by an Apostolic author, but it contains many excellent principles and concepts that can be adapted to most churches. As the old saying goes, “Eat the meat. Throw away the bones.”