

## THE FUTURE OF YOUTH MINISTRY ...

*There has been an on-going discussion within Protestant youth ministry regarding this... It can be found at <http://whymarko.com/2011/the-future-of-youth-ministry-episode-9>. Here is the content of their statements:*

**Chris Folmsbee** The future of youth ministry looks a lot like the past — an enduring search for what we'll never find — the “right” way to do youth ministry

**Seth Barnes** 20 years from now, youth ministry in the US will look like youth ministry in Europe. A few youth ministers will rediscover Jesus' model of youth ministry and actually try it out (with 20-somethings). The gap year experience will become an increasingly powerful tool in the youth minister's toolbox.

**Kara Powell** I think the future of youth ministry is one in which the age-segregation that has dominated the church ends and we move toward the type of intergenerational community and integration God intends. We're seeing in our research how important intergenerational community and relationships are to Sticky Faith.

**Brad Griffin** The future of youth ministry must move toward more intergenerational connectedness, more valuing of and partnering with parents, and less programming fluff.

**Andy Root** In the next few decades youth ministry will need to face the following: a way to actually work with families in a very complicated familial cultural locale, a way of dealing with pluralism—being able to claim the particularity of Jesus without it sliding into rigidity, and to find a robust theological position that connects revelation (the way we understand God's revealing presence) with our practices and strategies of day to day ministry.

**Lars Rood** I'm scared of one thing. How much we are going to have to shift things to draw parents into their faith for the first time. I think parent ministry is going to be a huge new reality of youth pastors.

**Kenda Dean** Teenagers know, better than we do, that when we ask them to be Christians, we are asking them to do a very dangerous thing. The only way out is to adopt a “safe” version of Christianity (which might not be Christian at all) that helps them become good, nice people instead of people who love others sacrificially. But as we know, good and nice “Christianity” seldom lasts past high school, since teenagers quickly learn that people can be perfectly good and nice without Jesus anywhere in the picture.

So I think in the future, youth ministry will try to re-weird-ify Christianity, highlighting Jesus' radical actions and peculiar self-giving love, in an effort to resist the American church's habit of trying to tame the gospel into a middle class bedtime story. If Christianity is dangerous, then we need to act like it. Teenagers aren't afraid of risk, but they want to know that Jesus is worth it. Young people are going to demand that we, the church, be who we say we are—people who obviously follow Jesus, which makes us “weird” in a culture based on self-actualization and self-fulfillment—or they're just not going to bother with us at all.

**Steve Argue** Hey church, adolescents are NOT leaving you. You are perpetually leaving them. Stop using statistical bullshit to project blame. Repent. Unless you're willing to let adolescents mess with your own life, you have no business messing with their lives.

Most churches are not worthy of youth pastors. Youth pastors, stop giving yourself to organizations that use you to better "market" their church to families; that expect you to "produce" programs; and that exploit you because they know it's hard to leave the kids you love. Walk away. Don't take the job, because if you do, you're wrecking it for all of us. Raise the bar. Boycott churches unworthy of youth pastors. Amen.

**Kurt Johnston** Youth ministry is too nuanced...too fluid...to predict its future with any level of certainty. I do not believe the youth ministry sky is falling and look forward to a bright future, in whatever shape it takes.

**Terrace Crawford** I think we are beginning to see less paid staff in youth ministry than ever before... and this is just the beginning. I believe churches will recruit more volunteers in the days ahead. Additionally, I think we'll see less silos in youth ministry and more integration of students into "big church." As a result, students will begin assuming more leadership roles. Finally, I think churches & ministries are having to "strip down" to the basics because of the economy & budget cuts — and it just might be what the Lord has ordered. I believe what we often see in the physical realm is mirrored in the spiritual. God may be salvaging the remnants and stripping away what doesn't need to remain in our ministries & we are better for it. Because of this, I am very hopeful about the future of youth ministry.

**Greg Stier** "In the future, the church will be forced to marginalize or centralize youth ministry... no in-between."

**Tash McGill** "The 'issue' with youth ministry is found in the adjective 'youth' and the verb 'ministry' being too often confused for nouns."

**Brian Berry** "The future of youth ministry will be irrelevant if we don't learn how to influence teens to embrace young adulthood instead of perpetual adolescence."

**Mike King** "I hope youth ministry in the future will embrace missionally all the things that the church is afraid of today... realistically, however, I don't think youth ministry as we know it today will exist 25 years from now!

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**Tic Long** "Youth ministry is at a crossroads of seeing culture as an enemy or as a friend. The road they choose will determine it's future."