

The End of Youth Ministry: A Study Guide

By Jonathan Warren

This discussion guide has been created for individual or small group use with the book The End of Youth Ministry, with permission from the author Andrew Root.

Most youth ministry books are practical. They talk about the *how* of youth ministry. *The End of Youth Ministry* is more philosophical. It focuses on the *why* question.

Opening Discussion:

How do you answer the statement “Youth Ministry is for _____?”

Talk about your own philosophy of ministry or describe your own actions. Why do you do what you do as a youth ministry leader? What keeps you doing this year after year?

Have You Ever Felt Like...

- How do you feel about J's use of the word fun? "The more I tried to make things fun, the more energy left the youth ministry and me." (p. 2)
 - Do you agree? Shouldn't youth ministry be about fun?
 - What role does fun play in your context?
- A life-changing experience with one of J's youth made her adjust her youth ministry philosophy from fun to joy. Have you ever had an experience with a young person that gave you a different perspective or made you change your mindset? (p. 3)
- How do you feel about Graham's philosophy: Helping kids to not waste their lives? (p. 5)
- Have you ever felt like Kathryn? As a youth worker, do you ever find yourself competing with other extracurricular youth activities? (p. 9)

Youth Culture, Parents & Identity

- Youth Culture was once the fast times. We have now seen a shift to it slowing down (or as the author calls it “the flip”). How have you seen and experienced this flip with youth or yourself? (p. 28-29)
- What was your life like growing up? Did you have a parent like Mrs. Wheeler or Lorelai Gilmore? More permissive or monitoring? How do you see parenting now? (p. 26-29).
- How does this affect youth ministry? What is youth ministry for when fast times give way to slow times (p. 33) Should it change? If so, how?

- Do you know parents like the Rodriguez-Eriksons, Tuckers or Dahls? Which set of parents do you resonate with the most? (Chapter 4).
- As a parent, do you find yourself under pressure to provide the “good life” for your children? (p. 16)
- Parents feel that their children must find their “thing” in order to state to the world: This is me.
 - What role does identity play in youth ministry?
 - How can it challenge the identity quest? (p. 65)
- From your perspective, what is the connection between identity and romance? (p. 76)
- Do you believe that youth ministry should contribute to helping youth find their “thing”? Why or why not? (p. 134)
- Parents often view church and youth group as having a supportive role, helping their kids find their thing to experience the “good life” (p. 57). What would our youth groups look like if we saw the gospel and the life of the church as an end to itself? How can we create this mindset?

Where is God in Youth Ministry?

- How do you feel about Wes’s youth ministry philosophy: To help young people encounter God? (p. 19)
- Does making youth ministry for God allow us to opt out of the cultural competition? Why or why not? (p. 18)
- How would you define the “good” life as opposed to the Good? What impact does that have in youth ministry? (Chapter 9).
- The author talks about the difference between the faith of moralistic therapeutic deism (moral horizon to happiness) and biblical faith (being transformed in Christ).
 - What is the difference?
 - How have you experienced this in your own life and how can we help cultivate this faith in children and youth? (p. 139)
- How can we proclaim faith as living, active and personal? (p. 166)
- Share a death experience. Where did you see God in this?
 - How can we create an environment where youth feel safe to share their death experiences? (p. 199)

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer says “When Jesus Christ calls a person, He calls them to come and die.”
 - Do you think the church has a tendency to tame the gospel in order to try and make it more attractive or less offensive?
 - How can we call young people to come and die? (p. 115)

Your Story and THE Story

“It is not enough for the Church to recognize young people by giving them enclosed spaces but pass on narratives through their own personhood, which young people can live within.” (164).

- What kind of stories do you have that you can pass on to your youth?
- How do stories shape our identity? (p. 185)
- How can we make confirmation more about stories, faith and relationships and less about propositions? (p. 202).
- Why are so stories so transformative (p. 159)
- How often have we invited youth to share their stories?
 - How can we help them connect their story to God’s story?
 - How can youth ministry be a safe space for a community of storytelling? (p. 195)
- How can the cross and resurrection become stories and experiences that form young people’s lives? How can youth leaders embody this? (p. 141)

Joy and Friendship

- What does it mean to say that youth ministry is for joy? (p. 67)
- What do you believe is the difference between happiness and joy? How does that impact youth ministry? (Chapter 8)
- What is the connection between joy and narration? How have you experienced this in your own life or seen it in the life of children and youth? (p. 159)
- Have you ever thought of friendship as a spiritual practice? How would you define real friendship? (Conclusion)
- Do we sometimes get too strategic and programmatic in youth ministry?
 - How can we leave more space for joy and reflection? (p. 68)
- How do joy and friendship reflect the Triune God? What does that look like with the children, youth and families in your congregation? (Conclusion)

Your Context

- What does Open Takes look like in your context? (p. 176)
- How can your context become an affirming community of discourse to which youth can belong? (p. 185)
- Does your church have an intergenerational gathering like the Vig? (Chapter 15) What would the Vig look like in your context?
- Have you experienced group contemplation or silence with children and youth? What was that experience like? (p. 208).
- We tend to talk about prayer as a topic with children and youth, but how often do we spend extensive time in prayer with them? How can we help teach them to pray with us? (p. 213).

Wrap Up:

Take a moment to name one take away from this study for you.

Challenge:

Make a video of yourself sharing a past or present personal story. The story should include three parts:

1. An experience (high or low) that you went through in the past or are going through presently.
2. Who is God to you and where did you see God in this experience?
3. How did God transform your life through this experience?
 - If it's a story that you are currently going through, share the struggle and virtue of waiting and hope and where you see God in the midst of it.

Share these videos with your youth and invite them to do the same.