

Discipling Young People: The Issues Teens are Dealing with and How to Respond

Young people today have been described as "the most physically safe but emotionally fragile generation in history." Many young people struggle to cope with the demands of modern life, including social media, school, exams, and global issues. We want to help our young people live well when life shakes them! This session will explore the areas in a young person's life where discipleship is needed and provide insight on the qualities that we as leaders need to demonstrate if we are to effectively provide loving care.

Paul Bowman has almost 30 years of experience in full-time youth ministry in the local church. He has served in a variety of settings throughout Ireland – both urban and rural – working with churched and unchurched young people. He is passionate about developing youth ministries that are rooted in the life of Christ, making disciples, and focusing on development of the whole person. He is committed to training and equipping the next generation of youth leaders. He lives with his wife Val and their three children in Saintfield, Northern Ireland. He holds a BSc Hons in Community Youth Work and a Masters in Transformational Leadership.

I. Starting The Caring Relationship

“The needs of young people today are as important as they have ever been. When we talk about pastoral care, we are talking about investing in lives.” S. Gibson

- A. Intentionality
- B. Understanding Youth Culture
- C. Time
- D. Listening

II. What are the areas of a young person’s life where pastoral care is needed?

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. Psalm 139:14 (ESV)

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man. Luke 2:52 (ESV)

Our aim in providing pastoral care is to see young people *thrive*, and not merely *survive* in life. We want them to experience abundant life flowing from a relationship with Christ as their Saviour and Lord. This inevitably will involve providing support, encouragement

and counsel for young people when they encounter challenges, crises, problems and questions. In youth ministry we must minister to the whole person.

To care for young people we need to understand what motivates them.

- The Three Tasks of Adolescence

There are many areas of a young person's life where pastoral care is needed. In this talk we will focus on the following:

A. The Need for Spiritual Care:

Care which relates to faith, the spiritual needs of a young person.

Pastoral care in the Christian church should be seen as a mission to help those who are Christ's to grow in him, and to help those who do not know Christ to discover him as their Lord and Saviour.

- helping them develop a relationship with God
- to grow in knowledge and understanding of God and the Christian faith

We strive to see young people grow as disciples (Col 1:28-29) developing a mature and durable faith (Ephesians 4:11-15).

B. The Need for Cognitive Care

This is care which relates to the mind and thinking of a young person. It is helpful for the young person both to understand the influence of their thinking on their experience and behaviour and how they can change the way they think. (Romans 12 v 2)

C. The Need for Emotional Care

Young people are emotional beings. What is it about modern life that caused this generation to be more stressed than ever? How has Covid-19 impacted their emotional wellbeing?

Good emotional health is important for young people, we want them to have the ability to cope with difficult things in life.

Pastoral care involves helping young people to face their own feelings, to understand why they feel as they do, and to progressively discover the constructive emotions that result from a Christ-centred life (Gal 5 v 22, 2)

D. The Need for Behaviour and Health Care

Adolescence is a developmental period of transition from childhood to adulthood, in which behavioural and physiological changes are at the same time exciting and challenging. It is a time of learning, in which mistakes will inevitably be made. (Eccl. 11 v 9, 10)

Pastoral care seeks to provide an affirming context in which young people feel able to face their mistakes and learn from them, honestly assessing their own attitudes and behaviour, and making behavioural changes.

E. The Need for Relational Care

God created human beings with a hunger for relationship – for relationship with Him and fellow people. At their very core humans are relational beings and their souls cannot prosper without being connected to others. (Cloud, 2003).

Pastoral care can help young people, deal with the explosive pressures they face by encouraging the development of personal boundaries, the building of positive friendship networks, and the maintenance of a living relationship with God. (Proverbs 4 v 23; 6 v 20-24; Psalm 119 v 9; Psalm 1 v 1; Heb 10 v 23-25; John 13 v 34)

In Youth Ministry we can create environments where authentic community can take place.

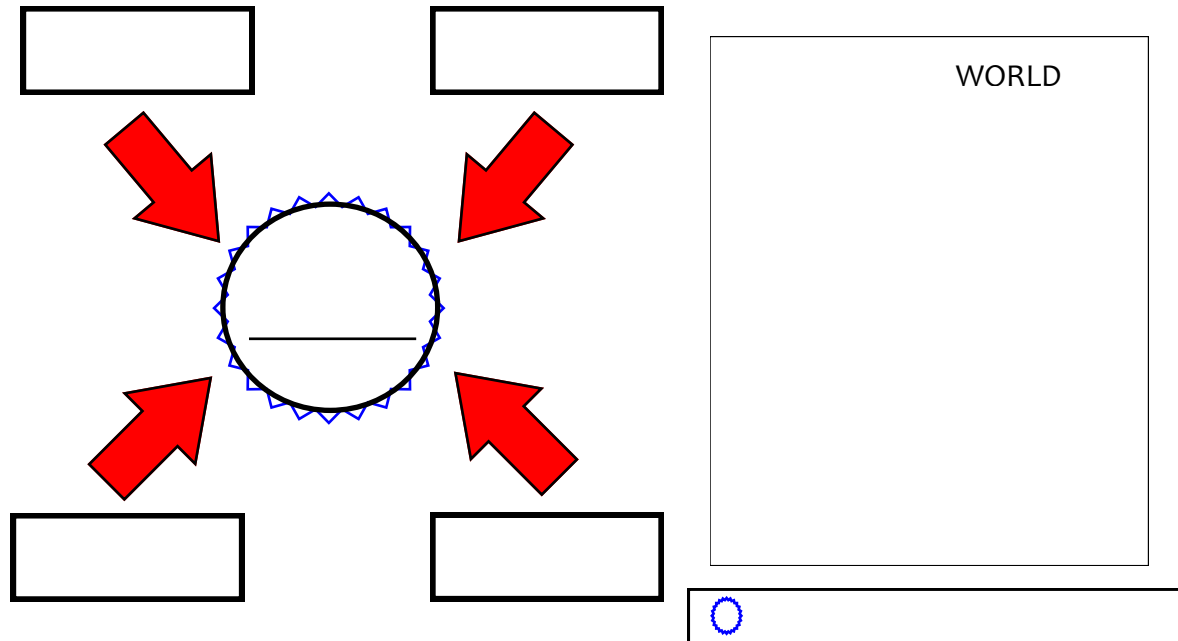
F. The Need for Material and Financial Care

A caring response focused on whole person development must also involve a commitment to providing such material and financial support as resources will allow. (Acts 2 v 44, 45; 4 v 34, 35).

Pastoral care involves seeking to explore and understand these aspects of a young person's life, even where there may appear to be no great issues.

(Adapted from *Pastoral Care for Young People* by Simon Gibson)

III. Investing in Lives



Suggested Readings:

Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0 Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*.

Tanith Carey, *What's My Teenager Thinking*. DK (2020)

G. R. Collins, *Christian Counseling 3rd Edition* (Thomas Nelson, 2007)

Gibson, S (1997) Understanding Pastoral Care. In Vernon, M. (Ed) *Pastoral Care for Young People*. London: Marshall Pickering, Haper Collins Religious

Dr. Steve Gerali, *What To Do When... Teenagers Deal with Death?* (Zondervan, 2010)

Dr. Steve Gerali, *What To Do When... Teenagers are Depressed and Contemplate Suicide?*

(Zondervan, 2010)

Dr. Steve Gerali, *What To Do When... Teenagers Question Their Sexuality?* (Zondervan, 2010)

Dr. Steve Gerali, *What To do When... Teenagers Encounter Bullying and Violence?* (Zondervan, 2010)

Dr. Steve Gerali, *What To Do When... Teenagers are Victims of Abuse?* (Zondervan, 2010)

Dr. Steve Gerali, *What To Do When... Teenagers Struggle with Eating Disorders?* (Zondervan, 2010)

Josh McDowell, *Handbook on Counseling Youth: A Comprehensive Guide for Equipping Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers, Parents* (Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2012)

James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z. Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World.* (Baker Books, 2017)