

What Got You Here Won't Get You There

What are the natural stages of development in a youth ministry? How must you change your leadership to respond to them?

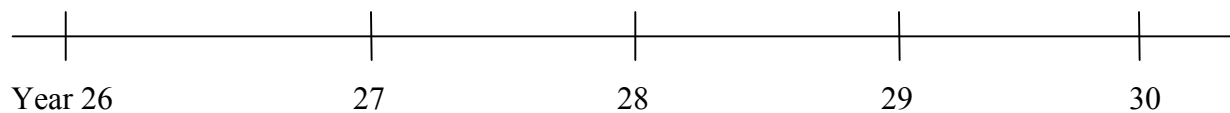
What it takes to start a youth ministry is very different from what it takes to grow one, or what is needed to expand its impact after it is healthy. Youth ministries follow certain patterns of development, and require a shift in focus from the leader at each stage. Not understanding these stages can create barriers to growth, since a youth leader will often not naturally concentrate on the right things. Looking at development of Christ's ministry, how do we understand these stages, and how do we lead our youth group through them?

Paul Bowman has 20 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 church 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 has been leading teams of young people on short-term mission trips to the Czech Republic for 15 years. 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.

I. How did Jesus model the process of building a disciple making ministry?

1. For the most part the gospels are written thematically rather than chronologically. Matthew focused on the kingdom of God, Mark on the Son of Man, and John on Jesus as the Christ. Luke on the other hand, made it his goal to arrange eyewitness accounts in “consecutive order” (Luke 1:3) as a carefully compiled account for Theophilus. Because of this, Luke gives us the clearest record of how the Jesus' ministry unfolded over time.
2. What would happen if we took the content of the four gospels and wove them together, using the chronology of Luke as the key? Tomas and Gundry have attempted to do this by crafting, A Harmony of the Gospels. In this fascinating study tool, parallel texts are lined up beside each other when they speak of the same event, or continue on alone when they are the only records of a particular narrative, arranged in chronological order. Gundry also includes an estimated time line to indicate how Christ's ministry was spread over three and a half years, based on feasts and other events that correspond to the Hebrew calendar.
3. Take a guess as to where the following events would be placed during the three and a half years of Christ's ministry
4. Choosing of the twelve

5. Teaching on the cost of discipleship
6. Feeding of the five thousand
7. Sermon on the mount
8. Temptation of Christ
9. John the Baptist



10. As we look at the events of Christ's life we observe that the focus of his ministry changed over time. It is possible to view his ministry in five distinct phases, each which have different priorities.

<i>Time</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Phase</i>
<i>ascension</i>		
<i>2 years</i>	Multiplication <i>Restructure, Entrust, Support & train</i> Observations about Jesus:	<i>Phase 5</i> <i>Multiplication</i>
<i>6-9</i>	Expanded evangelism <i>Cultivate, plant, reap</i> Observations about Jesus:	<i>Phase 4</i> <i>Expansion</i>
<i>months</i>	Ministry team <i>Heart, Skills, Knowledge</i> Observations about Jesus:	<i>Phase 3</i> <i>Equipping for ministry</i>
<i>1 ½ years</i>	Healthy core <i>Relationships, Love, Vision, God's Word, Prayer, Jesus</i>	<i>Phase 2</i> <i>Foundation</i>

	<i>Observations about Jesus:</i>	
30 years	<i>Leader</i> <i>Character, Identity, Calling, Testing</i> <i>Observations about Jesus:</i>	<i>Phase 1</i> <i>Preparation</i>
Birth		

A. Preparation phase – What Did Jesus Do?

Our Mission – Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus last words summed up the single mission of His life.

Our Motive – Mark 12:28-30 Love God / Love People

1. Character

Key events:

Luke 2:40 - Growth in wisdom and strength

Luke 2:41-50 - Twelve years old in the temple – the Word of God and submission.

Luke 2:52 – Growth in favor with God and men

Lessons for us:

2. Identity

Key events:

Luke 3:21 – Baptized by John

Luke 3:22 – Filled with the Holy Spirit

Luke 3:22 – Loved and chosen by the father

Lessons for us:

3. Calling

Key events:

Luke 2:28-32 – Simeon’s proclamation – “salvation” and “light”

Luke 2:38 – Anna’s proclamation – “redemption”

John 1:29 – John’s proclamation – “the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”

Lessons for us:

4. Testing

Key events:

Luke 4:3-4 – Stone to bread

Luke 4:5-7 – All the kingdoms of this world

Luke 4:8-13 – The highest point in the temple

Lessons for us:

B. The foundation phase

- i. The foundation phase lasted one to one and a half years in Christ's ministry. His priority during this time was to build an environment that would stimulate spiritual growth. He did not design his ministry to reach the masses, but to build close relationships with a small group of people who would become his disciples. He stayed in the wilderness area near the Jordan River and in the smaller towns of Galilee such as Cana and Nazareth. The miracles he performed were few, but designed to reveal His identity to the people following Him. This period began when Jesus returned from his wilderness testing and lasted until his rejection at Nazareth. During this time Jesus developed a solid foundation for the ministry ahead.

1. The foundation phase in the gospels:

Matthew 3:1 - 4:17

Mark 1:1 - 13

Luke 3:1 - 4:30

John 1:1 - 4:54

2. Christ's priorities during this phase

Read John 1:35-51. What were the characteristics of Jesus’ ministry during the first few days after his baptism by John and his time of testing?

- a. Building **Relationships** (John 1:35-39)

Lessons for us:

- b. Forming a group characterized by **love** (John 1:45-49)

Lessons for us:

- c. Building **vision** and a sense of expectancy (John 1:42, 50-51)

Lessons for us:

- d. Communicating **God's Word** (John 1:46)

Lessons for us:

- e. Building a **prayer** base (Luke 4:1,14)

Lessons for us:

- f. Communicating a proper understanding of **Jesus Christ** (John 1:36,41,49,51)

Lessons for us:

3. What Jesus taught in the foundation phase (Mark 1:14-15):

- a. Repentance and faith
- b. The Kingdom of Heaven

Think about your ministry. What would happen if you skipped one of these phases?

What would happen if you worked on developing the ministry in a different order?

Notice that the priorities of the previous phase always continue, serving as a foundation for the next phase. What would happen if you lost the priorities of one phase as you moved on to the next?

We do not expect that any ministry of ours will look exactly like what Jesus did. However, the principles from his life can serve as a model and focus our energy as we seek to develop a ministry that truly makes disciples.

Look again at the five phases of Christ's ministry. What phase of ministry does your youth group seem to be in?

What do you need to do now in preparation for the next phase?