

Youth Ministry

by Voddie Baucham

The speaker argues that youth ministry is a destructive and unbiblical institution that usurps legitimate authority and responsibility from parents and the church, and that it needs to be abolished in favor of the family integrated church model.

Duration: 1:05:04

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Psalm 78:2-8, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 4:5-6

Topics: "Youth Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the purpose and plan of the College and Careers ministry. Their purpose is to see unbelieving students become committed followers of Jesus Christ. They aim to achieve this through evangelizing, equipping, and engaging the students of their church and the surrounding community. The speaker emphasizes the need for improvement in youth ministry and highlights the importance of teaching the Bible and avoiding excessive focus on fun and games. They also mention a book that promotes a biblical and exegetical model for youth ministry, contrasting it with other models based on pragmatism and cultural norms. Overall, the goal of the ministry is to bring glory to God and multiply committed followers of Jesus.

Transcript

Can I get the Perspectives book from you for a moment? Can I get it? Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. All right.

I didn't know they were going to show you these resources. I didn't have my copy of the Perspectives book. But I want you to know that if you are wanting more information, and you're going to be wanting more information about the things that we talk about because we can't exhaust all of this in the time that we have, because our end time is 1030.

Yeah. So our end time is 1030. So you're going to want to get what I'm giving you.

Much of it is coming from the penultimate chapter in family driven faith. It's a lot of it's chapter nine of family driven faith. The first eight chapters of this book are really just kind of an exposition of Deuteronomy 6 and how we do Deuteronomy 6 discipleship in our home.

The last two basically talk about the implications for that in the way that we do church. And so I do deal with the youth ministry question head on in chapter nine and introduce family integrated church model in chapter 10. So this would be a great place for you to go and get more information about exactly what I'm sharing here in this session.

But the Perspectives book is another one that you need to have. I can't tell you how excited we are about the Perspectives book for a number of reasons. First of all, this was edited by Timothy Paul Jones, who teaches in the leadership school at Southern Seminary, which is one of the largest seminaries in the world.

Either the largest or one of the two or three largest seminaries in the whole world. And these guys had enough respect for family integrated church model to even include it in this book, because there are many out there who will not include anything that would exclude youth ministry as a possibility. And there are a lot of motives for that.

And let me just share with you a couple of the motives for that. Here's why it's hard for us to get a hearing. First of all, youth ministry has become a cottage industry.

It is a multi-million dollar cottage industry. You have youth ministers and we all recognize that. Where else can you go and be between 18 and 25 years old, know next to nothing and make 30, 40, 50 thousand dollars a year playing with teenagers? OK, where else can you go and get that kind of work? You can't.

OK, you can't. Here's the second thing. The church didn't want to let go of youth ministry because it's basically a product of spiritual welfare.

We have taken away the responsibility that God has given to parents. We've let them off the hook so that now someone else is responsible for the spiritual development of their children. Once you take away a responsibility like that from someone and begin to take on that responsibility and fulfill their duties, it's almost impossible to ever give it back.

Here's the other thing. In most of our churches, somewhere around 85% of our baptisms come from the youth ministry. Somewhere around 85% of our baptisms, for those of us who are non-Pedobaptists.

About 85% of the baptisms are coming from youth ministry. So it is a source of baptisms. Now that is often confused as a source of evangelism, but that's not at all the case.

It's a source of baptisms, not a very good source of evangelism. So that's the second reason. Here's another reason.

Colleges and seminaries don't want to let go of youth ministry because it is an income stream. Now think about this. If you're a seminary and you're providing seminary degrees for pastors.

You're providing a Master of Divinity degree for pastors. A Master of Divinity degree is your basic graduate degree for ministers. It's about 96 hours.

It's graduate hours, so it's a good three years minimum for someone to get a Master of Divinity degree. Well, but there's this pool of people who are going into youth ministry who didn't need a Master of Divinity degree because, you know, I'm not going to be a pastor. I'm just going to be a youth worker.

I'm going to be a youth director or whatever. You don't have to have a seminary degree. Certainly not a 96-hour Master of Divinity degree where I get all of this stuff that I'm not going to use because, after all, I'm not going to be a pastor.

So what seminaries did was they created a different degree program. It's a Master of Arts in Religious Education with an emphasis in youth ministry. It's about 60 hours long.

So now, let's say if a seminary could have 100 pastors coming to school, 100 men who are trained to be pastors. Now you offer the youth ministry degree and you can have 200 men and women who are coming there. You've got your 100 who are coming to be pastors.

You've got another 100 who are coming for a watered-down, chopped-up version of seminary education so that they can go be a youth minister. That is another income stream for the seminary. It's another income stream for the college.

Not to mention other entities and industries that filter off from youth ministry. For example, a great deal of income is derived through writing curriculum for youth Sunday school. So part of the problem with all of this, and again, why we're so excited about the Perspectives book, is that there are many individuals who will just dismiss the family integrated model out of hand or find excuses to dismiss the family integrated model, but they have a vested interest.

It's the fox guarding the hen house, okay? But Timothy Paul Jones was brave enough to include the family integrated model alongside the other models. That's one reason that we're excited. Here's a second reason that we're excited.

Anyone who reads this book, you do not have to have a seminary degree. You don't have to have much beyond a third or fourth grade education. If you have enough education where you learn how to read, it'll take you about 15 minutes to realize that there is one model in this book that is biblical and exegetical and two others that are trying to explain why you need not pay attention to it.

It is so obvious that it is at times embarrassing, okay? It is at times embarrassing. There is one biblical exegetical model in this book and only one, and that's the family integrated model. The others are purely based on pragmatism and cultural norms, not the clear, concise, unadulterated exposition of scripture.

So we are incredibly pleased to have an opportunity to have a book like this so that people can get it, put it in their hands. And so these are both back there. This one is available at our table, and this one is available at the NCFIC table.

So please, please, please, please, go get these. All right. Now, let's dive into this.

You notice the title of the presentation, Evaluating Youth Ministry, an Abolitionist's View. And I use that term, there's history to that term. When I was a doctoral student at Southeastern Seminary, and my supervisor was a man by the name of Alvin Reed.

Alvin Reed is well known in youth ministry circles. He did his dissertation on the Jesus movement and has studied revivals and young people and movements among young people for decades. Well, back in the late 90s, there's a lot of research coming out about youth ministry and about young people, about them falling away from the church, about their lack of a biblical worldview.

So Dr. Reed has a bunch of his young doctoral students studying this issue, reading on this issue, researching on this issue. So we would often sit together. I wasn't working in the area of youth ministry.

I was working in the area of apologetics. However, this was something that was discussed among a lot of the people that he supervised. And as we sat and talked about this, I realized that everyone else's position could be boiled down to, we've got to do a better job in youth ministry.

We're not doing a good enough job. Look at this. Look at what's being produced.

The numbers are there. The numbers don't lie. We've got to do a better job.

We've got to teach the Bible more. We've got to stop all the fun and games. We've got to do this.

We've got to do that. We've got to do the other. Well, it just sort of dawned on me, and I wouldn't say anything about it for a while, but it just kind of dawned on me.

I didn't grow up in church, didn't grow up in a youth group, don't have that background, but had preached at a lot of youth events over the years and things of that nature. And so it just kind of dawned on me. So we're talking about reforming youth ministry.

To reform something means to take it back to its original biblically intended purpose. Let me say that again. To reform something means to take it back to its original biblically intended purpose.

Youth ministry has no original biblically intended purpose, therefore it cannot be reformed. Let me say that again. I just want to be clear.

Youth ministry has no original biblically intended purpose, therefore it cannot be reformed. It needs to be abolished, not reformed. Kind of like the slavery debate.

There are those who are for amelioration. We just need to make life better for the slaves. Thanks, but no thanks.

No amelioration. Emancipation, thank you very much. Emancipation or nothing.

And it's interesting, because just like back then, there were people who were saying, oh man, emancipating the slaves, that's the economy of the South, and what are they going to do? They're imbeciles, they're not fully human, they can't survive on their own. We can't just do that. You can't just end slavery.

Same arguments are being made now about youth ministry. You can't just end it. It's not like these families can do this without us.

They're not going to do it. Look at them now, they're not doing it. All the while not acknowledging the fact that for the last 30 years we've been telling families, hey, we're trained professionals, please don't try this at home.

Now we're mad at people for taking our advice. So let me be clear right here at the outset, I am an abolitionist. I am a youth ministry abolitionist.

It needs to be abolished. It needs to be over. It needs to be done.

I am not a youth ministry reformer. I do not believe that youth ministry can or should be reformed. I believe that it never should have been instituted in the first place, and it has no place whatsoever in a healthy, biblically functioning church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I struggle sometimes with being clear, so I'm really trying here, okay? Listen to this. This is from Mark Iaconelli. The Iaconelli brothers are leaders in the youth ministry movement.

The curtain must be pulled back. If we're to keep young people involved in the church, and if we are to renew our congregations, we first must acknowledge that many of our current forms of youth ministry are destructive. That's a youth ministry guru, youth ministry leader, saying many of our forms of youth ministry are destructive.

Not just ineffective. He says they're destructive. Not just that they're doing a poor job of accomplishing the evangelism and discipleship of young people, but that they are in fact destructive.

Again, not my words. And this is not a guy saying we need to get rid of youth ministry. This is a reformer, okay? Iaconelli's a youth ministry reformer.

He's pro-youth ministry. Cannot conceive of a world without youth ministry, and he says many of its forms are destructive. Listen to this.

This is from Roger Dudley. Again, a researcher who's not talking about necessarily youth ministry. Not a youth ministry abolitionist.

In fact, you know, probably 90% of the youth ministry abolitionists in the country are here at this conference this weekend. So, you know, a recurrent focus of social philosophy since Plato's Republic has been the threat posed by the possibility that the young might not adopt the essential wisdom and values of that society. If a society is to continue its existence beyond one generation, the members must transmit what they consider to be necessary knowledge and values.

The continuity of a social system, by definition, requires transmission between generations. Applying this to institutional religion, churches and other religious communities must be vitally concerned with retaining the children from member families. In other words, preventing youth dropout is a major consideration for any religious group that desires a future.

And again, not saying that we don't evangelize the lost. Not saying that we don't go and grow the church by pressing forward and taking ground. Not at all what's being said here.

But think about the folly of this. Think about the folly, for example, of the United States of America saying, the United States of America must grow and continue to prosper. Those of us who are here will have no more kids.

We'll just continue to grow by finding other people to immigrate. Ridiculous, is it not? It's absolutely ridiculous. How do you grow effectively? How do you grow in a healthy manner? Well, you grow in a healthy manner by those of us on the inside reproducing, and again, not just giving birth to children, but by training and teaching the next generation among us and by healthy growth from the outside.

It's not an either-or proposition. It's a both-and proposition. Listen to this in Psalm 78.

Which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, that children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God. There's the picture of multigenerational faithfulness. There's the picture of passing on the truth from one generation to the next and the danger of not doing so.

Deuteronomy 6, 6 and 7. Part of the command to which the psalmist was referring, these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise. And again, that's just an Old Testament concept, right? Not a New Testament concept, that's an Old Testament concept.

That's what many of the opponents of youth ministry abolitionists argue. When you talk about families taking on their responsibilities, oh no, no, no, that's hyper-covenantalism. That's the Old Testament concept of the covenant.

That's not the New Testament concept. In the New Testament, you know, the church is comprised of believers. All this stuff about, you know, the generations and so on and so forth, absolutely not.

Old Testament, Old Covenant stuff, really? Ephesians 6, 1-4. Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and your mother.

This is the first commandment with a promise that it may be well with you and you may live long in the land. By the way, where did that come from? It came from Deuteronomy chapter 6, thank you very much, and Deuteronomy chapter 5. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Enough already.

This is a biblical concept, but not just a concept of the past. It is a concept of the church and always has been. Always has been.

We raise our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Does this mean that salvation now is all of a sudden understood as something that's passed on genetically? No, it doesn't mean that. Of course it doesn't mean that.

Folks, if we believed that salvation and the knowledge of God was something that was passed on genetically, we wouldn't need this command. Amen? Why do you need this command? If by virtue of just birth, if by virtue of merely being born in our homes, if we believe that, if we believe that that secured salvation and that our children didn't need to hear the gospel again and again and again and again, why do we worry about it? Just forget it. Of course we don't believe that.

That's why we teach the gospel to our children. That's why we follow this command of the Lord to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Our children need to hear the gospel.

Our children need to know Christ. And we have a responsibility in that regard. Folks, I believe there are three problems with youth ministry.

Number one, there is no clear biblical mandate for the current approach. There is no clear biblical mandate for the current approach. You cannot go to the Bible and come away from it with age segregated

youth ministry.

You can't get there from here. Or as we say, if I was home down south, that dog won't hunt. Amen? It's just not there.

There is no clear biblical mandate for the current model of age segregated ministry. It doesn't exist. So whatever we're doing in our current model, we're not doing it because it's biblical.

Whatever we're doing in our current model, we're not doing it because we went to the text and the text showed us clearly that that is how discipleship ought to be accomplished among the generations. And that's a problem. By the way, that's enough.

Amen? That's enough. But there's more. Number two, youth ministry usurps legitimate authority and responsibility.

Youth ministry usurps legitimate authority and responsibility. And it does this in two ways. Number one, it usurps legitimate authority and responsibility from parents.

But here's the second way, and we often don't think about this, but it usurps legitimate authority from the church and responsibility from the church. Well, how does it do that? Here's how it does that. Let's just think about what we would call the healthy youth ministries, okay? Because this is one of the things that people are talking about now, it's healthy youth ministry.

The first phase of that was, hey, the time for playing games is over. Okay? We're going to be serious. And so when we get our youth together on Wednesday nights, we're going to teach the Bible.

We're going to sing songs that are thick and biblical theology. We're going to preach expositional messages. We're going to give them doctrine and theology.

We're going to give it to them. Well, when I hear people talking about that and their quote unquote healthy youth ministries, here's my question. Isn't that what the church as a whole is supposed to be doing? So why do they need to be over in the basement with you on Wednesday night if that's what the pastor is supposed to be doing with the whole church? Why do you need a subculture in the church if you're doing the same thing that the church as a whole is supposed to be doing? Why are you duplicating the efforts if you're going to teach so strong? How come they can't listen to the pastor? And if you're going to be teaching so strong, how come the rest of the church can't be listening to you? You follow? It makes no sense.

And these are the strong, stout, healthy youth ministries. It's usurpation all the way around. But wait, there's more.

Number three, youth ministry has not accomplished its own stated goals. It has not accomplished its own stated goals. That's why everybody, not everybody, everybody that's beyond everybody.

Everybody is talking about reforming youth ministry. I mean, there are very few people who over the last 10, 15, 20 years, as all the research has been coming out, there are very few people who looked at that and said, no, we don't have a problem. Just stay the course.

Keep on doing what we're doing. It's working. It's effective.

We're seeing the fruit of it. Nobody's saying that. Everybody's acknowledging that it's broken and that it has not accomplished its own stated goals.

So here are my three problems in a nutshell. These three. It's not based on anything you find in the Bible.

It is a clear usurpation of authority and responsibility. And it has not accomplished its own stated goals. So here's the question.

If all this is true, why are we holding on to this ministry? I answered that question when we started. It is a multi-million, if not multi-billion dollar cottage industry. You know that there are t-shirt companies that have come into existence and they thrive on nothing more than providing t-shirts for youth ministry events? Now, as these youth ministry events get bigger and there's staging and lighting and all this other stuff that sort of happens, there's a whole nother industry of people who just do staging and lighting and sound for youth ministry events, not to mention bands.

Listen, it's kind of cold, so it may not work here. All right. But when it warms up, here's what you could do.

Wherever you live, you just go throw a rock at the nearest tree and a youth band will fall out of that tree. They'll know five chords and ten songs and they know how to put them together in such a way to make teenage girls cry and that's all you need to make a good living doing music at youth events. There's an entire industry of bands that have risen up just to do youth events because they've multiplied so rapidly that there are not enough people to go around.

And if you're wondering whether or not people can make a good living doing this, let me share this with you. I've never done a whole lot of youth events. About 10% of my schedule, maybe 15% of my schedule, my itinerant ministry schedule was youth events.

I would do two or three youth camps in a summer. This is several years ago before I just stopped doing any of the youth events. In fact, when all of this was going on, while I was a doctoral student, I was doing these youth events with a view toward making some kind of change.

And then I realized that there was two things that was wrong with that. Number one, there was hypocrisy because I didn't believe in what I was doing. And secondly, people would never take me seriously if I continued to do youth events.

And then there's a third reason and that was there's a lot of people who saw so many things wrong with youth ministry and youth events and here's what they'd do. They'd come up to me and they'd say, we came to this camp right here because we heard that you were the one who's going to be preaching. And we knew that it'd be a safe place to bring our kids.

I said, you know what? I got to get out. By the way, my last year of doing youth ministry, my last year of doing youth events, my last year of doing youth camps, again, two, three camps in a summer. I'm done.

I'm not doing any more of these. I get a phone call from one of the most prominent youth camp ministries in America today asking me to come back and do a youth camp for them. I said, no, I'm not doing any youth events ever again.

I'm a youth ministry abolitionist. That would be hypocrisy and it would give people an excuse to stay in youth ministry. To which the response from the other end came, listen, if you change your mind, just let us

know.

And by the way, by the way, we have changed our structure and we'll be able to provide you a little more financially for doing our camps. By the way, five days of youth camp, they're offered to me for five days of youth camp, \$10,000 for the week, \$2,000 a day to do a youth camp. And we all sitting there going, can they call me? So when I say that it is a lucrative cottage industry, I just want you to have some sense of perspective.

Okay. By the way, here's another thing that has arisen around youth ministry. Now, youth ministries, okay, you're taking your kids to these events and they've got staging and lighting and smoke machines and bands and all this sort of stuff.

What happens in church? Well, pastor, we need to build a youth building. And in that youth building, we need to have all the latest state-of-the-art high-tech equipment. So now there are churches that are spending millions of dollars on youth buildings so that they can have staging and lighting and high-tech equipment.

Why? Because you've created this appetite in the young people. They go away for a week of camp, you know, and God just changes their life, you know, forever. So school starts back and this is it.

This is real and this is what it has to be. So now if you want to continue to feed that, what do you have to do? You've got to do the same thing on a micro scale at your church youth group meetings. So now you've got an entire industry of people who are building multi-million dollar youth buildings.

So do you see how many people are dipping into the trough here? It's not going anywhere. It's not going anywhere. There's too much money being made.

It's not going anywhere. Not to mention the spiritual side of it where there are a lot of people who will say, Well, you know, I got saved when I was in a youth group. Therefore, we've got to have youth group.

Really? You've got a friend who was saved in a bar. According to your logic, therefore, are you smelling what I'm stepping in? So again, that's why it's still here. That's why it's still here and it's not going anywhere.

And so we have people who will just say, No, we just need to tweak it. We just need to do a better job of it. So these three, let's look at these three.

Number one, no biblical mandate. Here's what I want us to look at. We're going to look at a mission statement from a youth ministry.

Now, there's mission statements all over from youth ministries all around the country. And we don't have time to go through a bunch of these. But I chose this one because it is the mission statement from a prominent evangelical reformed church.

That's number one. Okay? The pastor of this church is a Bible teacher. It's known internationally.

It's a biblical, thoughtful ministry. Number two, because of that, there are thousands of youth ministries around the country that have basically just cut and pasted this mission statement as their mission statement. So if you go to a church that happens to have this as their mission statement and everything, it doesn't necessarily mean that I went to your church to get this.

It just may mean that your church went to the church that I got this from in order to get this statement. But again, I want us to look at it and sort of interact with it here for a moment. Number one, our purpose, to see unbelieving students become committed followers of Jesus Christ.

By the way, let me say a word about the terminology here. It used to be youth ministry. Now the term is student ministry.

And there's a reason for that. What began to happen is you have your youth ministry and people are in the youth ministry from the time that they're 12 or 13 to the time that they're 18. And then they're out of the youth ministry.

Well, they've been part of this subculture and not part of the church. So they graduate from the youth ministry and generally they graduate from church. They have a different ecclesiology, a different philosophy, a different theology.

So now all of a sudden I graduate from high school and I got to graduate from youth group. I got to go over to big church. I don't want to go over to big church.

They don't sing the same songs. They don't have the same kind of sermons. They don't play the same kind of games.

And I don't know these people. These people are not my people. Those are my people over there in the youth group.

That's my community of faith. The big church is not my community of faith. And I hate it.

And so they would drop out. So what do you do? Well, here's what you do. You establish the college ministry to have a continuation of youth ministry so that these people will continue in a subculture a little bit longer.

Well, then the term youth ministry no longer applies. So we go from youth ministry to student ministry. So if you're a student in middle school, student in high school, student in college, you're a part of the student ministry.

Therefore, the change in terminology. When we were no longer dealing with youth, but grown men and grown women who refused to grow up and go to church, we had to change the name. Okay? Because that's what we're dealing with.

Grown men and grown women who refuse to go to church. Why? Because they've been taught for the majority of their maturing life that the church is irrelevant, irrelevant. Its ministers don't understand you.

Its people don't understand you. And the life of God is not there. The life of God is here.

We don't sing their songs. We reject their songs. Why? Because the life of God is not in their songs.

The life of God is in our songs. We don't worship like they do. We have the stage and the lights.

It's a concert every week. You go over there, you're not going to get a concert every week. We don't preach the stuff that they preach.

Okay? So basically now you've got grown folks. Full grown folks. Who are saying, the youth group is my church.

So now we've got to do something. Okay, fine. Now we've got student ministry.

We go all the way up through college. And then you've got college and careers. Why do you have college and careers? Well, because when you graduate from college, you've still never been part of big church.

You don't want to go over there. You're no longer a student. You can't be part of the student ministry.

So we've got to find another name. What's the name? College and careers. You can't say amen, you ought to say ouch.

So that's their purpose. To see unbelieving students become committed followers of Jesus Christ. Our plan.

How do we do that? We desire to achieve our purpose through evangelizing, equipping, and engaging the students of this church and of the surrounding community. That's how we do it. We evangelize students, we equip students, and we engage students from this church and from the surrounding community.

By the way, I want you to keep this in mind. All right? I want you to keep this in mind. Because one of the excuses for continuing youth ministry is this.

Well, we have to do youth ministry because youth ministry is an outreach ministry. We're not trying to take parents' place. We're just reaching out to students.

And we're dealing with those students who don't have believing parents or who don't have parents who can disciple them. According to the plan, the plan is to continue to perpetuate a culture of non-parental involvement. It's a house of cards, people.

It's a lie. Why do you do this? Because parents are not doing what they're supposed to do. Really? You do this because parents are not doing what they're supposed to do.

And yet, your plan to accomplish your purpose is to go around parents, grab students apart from their parents, and then do the job that God has assigned to their parents and send them out to go and help you do the same thing. You're a liar. You're not doing this because parents aren't doing their job.

You are actually creating the environment whereby you go around parents and don't allow or expect them to do their job. Evangelize. We're committed to exposing the middle school and high school students to the message of Jesus Christ.

It is also the role of every committed follower to reach out to those God has placed around them. We challenge the students to take the gospel with them everywhere they go. Equip.

We want to teach, mature, and train those who are seeking to become committed followers, equipping them to reach out to their peers. Engage. We want to provide opportunities for our committed students to be actively involved in ministering to one another.

Our goal is to bring glory to God and to multiply committed followers. Did you follow this? Engage. We want to provide opportunities for our committed students to no longer be part of the youth ministry

because we exist for the non-committed students.

No. If they're committed we want them to then engage in perpetuating youth ministry. Our vision to evangelize, equip, and engage as many middle and high school students as possible for Jesus Christ.

Now this all sounds great but there's problems with it. Number one, the verses cited in this mission statement reflect the mission of the church as a whole. Now they've ripped them kicking and screaming out of context to apply them to student ministry but they don't apply to student ministry.

They apply to the church as a whole. Hear the verses. Continue steadfastly in prayer being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

At the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ on account of which I am in prison that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak. That's the verse that they chose. Here's the second verse that they chose.

Colossians 4, 5 through 6. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious seasoned with salt how you ought to answer each person. Third verse they chose.

Ephesians 4. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ until we all attained the unity of faith and of knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. And again, since when did that become a youth ministry verse? The last one. We were created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Those are all great verses. But the verses cited in the mission statement reflect the mission of the church as a whole. Here's the other problem.

The author is assuming facts not in evidence. He's assuming whoever authored this statement and the overwhelming majority of youth ministry statements assumes that age-segregated youth ministry is an appropriate ministry and that therefore you can do this. Look at the assumption.

Number one, age-segregated youth ministry is a legitimate ministry model. That's the assumption. That fact hasn't been proved here.

They have not gone to scripture to demonstrate that age-segregated ministry is an appropriate and legitimate way to go about the mission of the church. And nobody ever does. Why? Because there's no place in the Bible from which you can make that argument.

It's not there. It's not there. So they're assuming facts that are not in evidence.

This ministry exists, therefore it's legitimate and appropriate. So we're going to make statements about what this ministry ought to look like already assuming that it ought to exist. Secondly, any biblical admonition to the church as a whole can be extracted from scripture and applied to youth ministry without explanation.

That's an assumption. You can just lift any text of scripture. We've already assumed that youth ministry is legitimate and appropriate.

Now we're going to assume that because it's legitimate and appropriate we can go grab any verse of scripture that pertains to any type of ministry and say, hey, it fits this ministry too. These are their assumptions. By the way, it's a common thing.

Listen to this from Doug Fields in his book Purpose Driven Youth Ministry. Now, purpose driven youth ministry. How many of you think you know what church he was a youth minister at? He was a youth minister at Saddleback.

This was Rick Warren's youth pastor. Rick Warren writes Purpose Driven Church. Doug Fields writes Purpose Driven Youth Ministry.

Purpose Driven Church, bestselling book. Everybody, everybody read Purpose Driven Church, started designing their churches to be purpose driven. Doug writes Purpose Driven Youth Ministry.

How many of you know that folks lined up to buy Purpose Driven Youth Ministry as the companion to the Purpose Driven Church so that their youth ministries could be purpose driven as well? And listen to what Fields says. Any youth ministry is capable of growth when it is built on God's purposes for the church. Did you follow? You see that logic? There's a non-sequitur here.

Any youth ministry is capable of growth when it is built on God's purposes for the church. So the youth ministry has replaced the church. The material in this chapter will help you discover God's five purposes for a healthy ministry.

These purposes are the vital component, the cornerstone constructing a youth ministry that enjoys long-term health and growth. So he basically takes the principles of purpose driven church which are already snatched, kicking and screaming out of context. He snatches those kicking and screaming out of context and just superimposes them on the youth ministry that he's already assumed is legitimate by the mere force of its existence.

Y'all see this. Not only does he assume facts that are not in evidence, but there's not one mention of parents. Again, sound, solid evangelical church.

Bible teaching church. I mean, a cornerstone of Bible teaching churches. And yet, in their mission statement for their youth ministry, there is not one single solitary mention of the parents of these kids.

Not one. Not one. Now, here's the good news.

The good news is that this is changing. Because what's happening is that there are individuals out there who are now writing about, you know, a family based approach to youth ministry and that's actually one of the perspectives in the Three Perspectives book is, you know, the sort of family based approach, family equipping approach, you know. So, what people started saying is we gotta bring parents along.

Okay? Again, the assumption is that this youth ministry thing exists, therefore, it's right. So, if we're gonna do something about it, what we do has to be, because again, I mean, you can't get away from the Scriptures. The Scriptures clearly talk about parents and parents' responsibility and all this sort of stuff.

So what's the answer? Is the answer to put the responsibility back on the parents? No, no, no, no, no, no, no. We got our cottage industry. It must be protected at all costs.

So we have to bring them onto our playing field. And so now, instead of the 25-year-old being the best friend to the kid, the 25-year-old is now the instructor of the parents. In the words of that Texas theologian, Dr. Phil, how's that working for you? Secondly, usurping parental authority Okay? Remember the first problem, first problem is there is no biblical exegetical basis for it.

The second problem is usurping biblical parental authority. For the sake of time, I mean, we've dealt with this. Let me move to the third one because we're about to run out of our time here and I wanted to have time for at least a couple of questions.

Third issue, it doesn't work. Remember that third problem? It has not accomplished its own stated goals Here's some things you need to be aware of. The Nehemiah Institute, you need to go look up the Nehemiah Institute and the Peer's Test.

Okay? The Peer's Test. They've been testing worldview in America since 1988. Since 1988, the Peer's Test has never seen a result of more than 10% of those who profess Christianity in America who have a biblical worldview.

Okay? Less than 10% possess a biblical worldview. And that's of professing Christians in the United States. According to the Barna Group, and I didn't list them here, according to the Barna Group, only 51% of pastors in America have a biblical worldview.

Only 51% of pastors. Now, according to the Nehemiah Institute, by the way, the number one indicator of whether or not a young person will have a biblical worldview is where, how, and by whom they're educated. That's it.

Where are they educated? How are they educated? By whom are they educated? It's the number one indicator. Remember, kindergarten through 12th grade, 14,000 instructional hours in school. Okay? If we put the efforts and the money into seeing to it that parents were able to give their children a Christian education that we've put into upholding this cottage industry of youth ministry, we'd make a huge world of difference.

Okay? National Study of Youth and Religion. Christian Smith, when he was the chair of the Sociology Department at UNC Chapel Hill, started the National Study of Youth and Religion, and we'll talk about some of their work here in a minute. But they, he published a book called Soul Searching.

Soul Searching is where they basically presented the results of this \$4.5 million research project called the National Study of Youth and Religion, and it is not pretty. LifeWay Research. And again, LifeWay Research is one of those instances of the Fox Garden and the Hent House.

LifeWay Research is basically the publishing arm, the curriculum publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. It used to be the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, and they changed their name to LifeWay. And again, I can talk about Southern Baptist because I are one, and I can talk about LifeWay and Brodman and Holman because they published my first books.

So I, I, I can say things that other people maybe cannot say. But whenever research about youth ministry comes out from LifeWay Research, I always take it with a grain of salt because a large portion of their income is derived from doing curriculum for youth Sunday school and youth ministry type outlets. Okay? So, it's the Fox Garden and the Hent House.

They're trying to figure out how to do a better job or, or what's actually going on and what's actually wrong out there with young people. But they have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo as it relates to the promotion of youth ministry. Okay? So, again, I, I applaud them.

In light of that, I applaud them for the work that they have done and the things that they have produced that have shown again and again and again that what we're doing is not working. Also, the book *Already Gone*, you know, the work that Ken Ham and Britt Beamer did together in their research and the book *Already Gone*. You want to, you want to make that available to yourself.

I talk about a lot of these things in *Family Driven Faith* in that, that, the penultimate chapter there in that book and again, a lot of that will be addressed also in the *Perspectives* book that you're all going to go and get when this is all over. But let's look at one of these in the time we have. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a term that was coined by Christian Smith in his work in the National Study of Youth and Religion.

He tried to put together this idea, basically said, what is it that we've seen in these young people? How do we define the theology of these young people that we've, that we've interviewed? And this was surveys, personal interviews, and the likes. And again, Evangelical kids, Roman Catholic kids, you know, non-denominational kids, Pentecostal kids, I mean, they looked at everybody. But they saw a common theme, a common theological theme running throughout all of these young people.

And it was, he termed it Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. And here are the tenets of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Number one, a God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on Earth.

So far, so good. Two, God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. We just left the reservation, folks.

Okay? We just left the reservation. Two things. Number one, these kids don't understand the gospel.

God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other. They just left the gospel. There is none good.

There is none righteous. God wants us to be good. We just left the reservation.

No gospel. Here's the second problem. As taught in the Bible and by most world religions, there we have Religious Relativism.

All religions are basically the same. I mean, at their core, they basically teach the same ethic at their core. Thirdly, the central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself.

By the way, Lifeway Research questioned parents and asked parents about their goals and desires for their children and at the top of the list was for their kids to be healthy and happy. This theology among teenagers didn't just appear out of whole cloth. They got it from mom and dad.

Because the greatest goal that mom and dad have for them is for them to grow up and be healthy and happy and well balanced in life. Number four, God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. Fine.

Good people go to heaven when they die. That's moralistic therapeutic deism in a nutshell and that is the most common theology held among teenagers who profess to know God in America. That's what we've produced.

That's what we've gotten from this industry that we've created. Objections. There are people who have objections to this and I won't be able to go into all these in a whole lot of detail here but here are basic objections that we hear.

After a while having conversations about youth ministry I've just I've gone to just having the conversations by myself. People come up to me and they're like you know I just want to talk to you about this youth ministry thing. I don't even I'm like okay we can but can you just let me save us some time.

I'll ask your question and answer it. Okay. Just to save time.

We need youth ministry for parents who aren't Christian or don't disciple their children. We need youth ministry for parents who aren't Christian or don't disciple their children. By the way there's an assumption inherent in this question.

Let me ask it with the assumption intact. We need youth ministry for parents who aren't Christian or don't disciple their children. Because we all know that God was never able to save children before there was youth ministry unless they had Christian parents who would disciple them.

That's the assumption inherent in the question. We've got to have youth ministry because without youth ministry these kids who don't have Christian parents or these kids whose parents are not discipling them they have no hope. So throughout the history of the church before the last half of the last century God and his people were completely ineffective at reaching young people who didn't have Christian parents and were completely ineffective at doing anything for young people whose parents just refused to disciple them.

Folks, that's absolutely ridiculous. It's ridiculous. Again, begging the question.

For those of you familiar with any debaters out there? Anybody out there? You're in debate? Your kids are in debate? You heard that term? You're begging the question. By the way, there's a difference between begging the question and raising the question. Most people when they use that even when you watch the news at night well that begs the question.

Why so and so and so and so? What they mean is that raises the question. Begging the question means assuming facts that aren't in evidence. Begging the question means you're making a statement that can only be accepted if certain parts of the statement are agreed upon by both of us and we haven't agreed upon them.

This objection begs the question. It assumes that youth ministry is appropriate. It assumes that the church does not have an answer for the widow or the orphan or for the derelict Christian parent and nothing could be further from the truth.

The church has had to deal with this since its inception and has done quite well. Thank you very much. Amen? Well you guys have all this emphasis on fathers.

There's a lot of kids out there who don't have fathers. What are you going to do for them? I don't know. Let's ask Timothy because his spiritual heritage was Lois and Eunice his mother and grandmother.

So I don't know. Let me go ask the Apostle Paul about the youth ministry that he established that somehow got Timothy disciplined because he didn't have a daddy. Oh wait, I'm sorry.

There was no youth ministry and Timothy was actually able to be discipled and become a pastor without a youth ministry and without a daddy. Next question please. Two.

There's nothing that says we can't have age segregated ministries. I won't spend much time on this because we've dealt with this here in this conference. This is a sufficiency of scripture issue.

Nothing in the Bible that says we can't have it. Again, there's a whole host of things that the Bible doesn't say we can't have. That's not the proper argument.

Okay? Nothing in the Bible says we can't have it. You still got to demonstrate that it's appropriate to do it in the first place. Again, assuming facts that aren't in evidence.

Thirdly, what about youth evangelism? How are you going to evangelize youth? Because youth ministry exists to evangelize youth. In fact, one of the arguments made by one of the positions here, I'm not sure if it's family based or family equipping, is that they see young people as a people group to be evangelized. Okay? Several problems with that.

There's a grammatical problem with that. A people group, according to the New Testament, the term used there in the Great Commission is that we're to evangelize panthata ethne, all peoples. There's a word there that ought to sound familiar to you.

Ethne, ethnos, ethnic. A people group is an ethnic group. Teenagers do not comprise a people group.

They don't have a language. They don't share an ethnicity. They're not a people group.

Here's the other thing. Inherent in the evangelization of people groups is the establishment of churches among people groups. You can't establish churches among young people like they're a people group.

So again, that is a completely illegitimate scripture twisting argument. Okay? The greatest youth evangelism tool in the world is men's ministry. You give me a father, we'll have his son, we'll have his daughter.

Amen? You give me a father. Again, is that guaranteed? Nope. But it's a whole lot more effective than bringing the kid into a wolf pack.

What about God's call on the youth minister? God called me to youth ministry. I know he did. Really? How do you know that if there's nothing in the scripture to indicate that it's a legitimate ministry? You want to do something and you're blaming God for it.

And you're asking me not to question you because you're blaming God for it. How's God calling you to that if it doesn't exist from a biblical perspective? Huh? What are the biblical qualifications for youth ministry? Anybody? Anybody? Oh, 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1. Really? Because that's for pastors and elders. Huh? So what are they? What are the biblical qualifications for a youth pastor or for a Sunday school teacher for that matter? What do you do with that? You can't do anything with that.

God called me to be a youth pastor and I know he did. Really? Glad you feel that way. But I need more than just your verbal assertion.

That's not how God operates, folks. That's not how God operates. Well, he gave me a passion for young people.

Really? Go get married and have a house full of them. There's more than one way to fulfill that passion. Your passion does not a calling make.

We've got to echo this again and again and again. I said we were going to leave some time for some questions. I even skipped stuff so that we could have time for questions.

They just gave me my zero card which means I have no time for questions. There's other people clapping down the hall which means there are people who finished before we did and I am now the most derelict of sinners in the group. So, here's what we're going to do.

We're going to pray that God will multiply the time that we've stolen and that he will use what he's given all of us here in this room and then I'm going to ask you to do something for me. I'm going to ask you to let me escape. I'm going to pack up my bag and I'm going to go down to our table because I know you have questions and if we start doing that in this room we won't get out of this room.

So, I'm going to go down to our table. I'm going to do that for two reasons. One, so we can empty this room and I can get down there where I can answer all your questions and take all the time that you need and two, so that you'll come to our table and buy stuff.

And know that all the proceeds from anything that you buy at our table go to feed hungry children. Let's pray. Father, thank you for the time that you've given us.

Thank you for your truth that we can trust and we can rely upon. Grant by your grace that we might continue to saturate ourselves in your truth and let you be true that we're every man a liar. May we trust your word more than we trust culture.

May we respond to your word and not respond to trends. May we do what you've called us to do and clearly outlined in the scriptures trusting that they are sufficient. This is our prayer.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Where you can search our online network to find family integrated churches in your area, log on to our website ncfic.org

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22575.mp3>

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