



Session 8

Lesson 14: Relational Youth Ministry



Scripture Text

- Matthew 9:35 – “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.”



Key Terms

- Intimate relationship with Jesus
- Burden
- Obstacles
- No burden?



Lecture Objectives

- Identify and describe the key elements of effective “relational youth ministry”
- Describe why these elements are key to effective youth ministry



To Think About Before You Go On

- How would you define “relational youth ministry”? How does it compare and contrast with other types of youth ministry? Take time to write a definition here.

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Keys to Effective Relational Ministry

Tom Miller, the man who modeled youth ministry to me, once said, “There are only two things you need to be effective in youth ministry: 1) an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, filled with the knowledge of His grace, and 2) a burden for kids. Like most of Tom’s ideas, the message was simple but challenging (quite like the gospel in that way). So often find myself, in seasons of dryness and burnout, turning back to those two fundamental principles. If I am struggling in the ministry, it is almost always a reflection of a lack of intimacy with Christ or the lack of a burden for kids. If a youth minister is willing to protect these two areas with great prayer and attention, his or her ability to effectively minister to youth will be sustained.

An Intimate Relationship with Jesus

- Having a clear understanding of God’s grace
- A passion to worship
- Growth in spiritual disciplines
- Fruitful life

A Burden for Kids

What is a burden? The following is a list of definitions to consider: 1. That which is carried; a heavy load. 2. That which is born with difficulty to bear, such as care or sorrow.

A burden is what you feel when you are surfing through the channels of your TV late at night and come across the faces of starving children. A burden is what you feel when you hear the horrifying cries of a middle school student who just found out her dad is cheating on her mom. A burden is that pain you experience when you watch a young man begin to inhale his way to destruction.

In order for one to have a long-term impact on the life of an adolescent, he or she must be moved by a burden. Christ gives this burden to us as we begin to understand the fullness of his love for his children and us. Nothing destroys the passion for ministry quicker than losing this burden. What is it that keeps us

from experiencing this burden? The callousness of our hearts formed by years of exposure to brokenness to which we do never respond. We quickly flip the channel so as to not have to engage. We write the check but remain emotionally disconnected. We treat our ministry like a job, and not like the supernatural work of God showing His grace to those in need.

When you see the lives of high school and middle school students and the broken world they live in, does your heart break? One of the volunteer leaders that work in the ministry at Chesterfield is so filled with burden for kids. Busy with two teenagers of her own. Judy can't tell you a story about the kids she ministers to without her eyes suddenly flooding with tears. Some would say that she is just overly emotional. I say her heart breaks when she sees the brokenness in the lives of kids. She is a great minister to youth because of her burden for youth.

Take a minute to ask yourself the following questions:

What makes your heart break when you see the lives of high school kids?

What could you do to help?

What keeps you from getting involved?

A Tragic Story: Clever but Confused

I once heard of a youth minister who, while candidating for a new position, made the following statement in response to a question regarding relational ministry; "I love God. I like kids." In my mind, this statement disqualified this individual from ministry. Where in the Bible are we called to "like" someone? While I believe his response was more the result of trying to be clever, his statement reflects an attitude that too easily finds its way into our hearts. We must love God and kids. We must love God so that we can love kids. Without this overwhelming love for youth, you will not be able to effectively minister to this broken generation.

What do you do when you don't feel the burden?

When the burden for high school students seems to be lost, when one more conversation with a middle school student's recent break up (the fifth one this week) is mind-numbing, when the thought of hanging out with kids leaves you thinking about how much money you could have made if you were an architect, veterinarian, lawyer, or senior pastor, it is time to reconnect to Christ. At the heart of all ministry is a connection between our intimacy with Christ and our burden for people. This is clearly seen in the great commandments.



- Go back and rethink the 'To think about before you go on' questions on the first page of this lecture.