

EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP IN YOUTH MINISTRY

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

The purpose of this workshop is to help participants develop an understanding of the centrality of evangelism and discipleship in youth ministry; and identify ways of developing a youth program based on evangelism and discipleship. During the workshop, participants will explore statements about youth ministry, consider key elements of evangelism and discipleship for youth, and determine specific activities that will help them build a program for youth in their churches.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

- I Introduction and Overview *(15 minutes)*
- II Statements about Youth Ministry *(25 minutes)*
- III Presentation of the Evangelism/Discipleship Circle *(15 minutes)*
- IV Bible Study *(30 minutes)*
- V Evangelism and Discipleship in My Church's Youth Ministry *(30 minutes)*
- VI Closing *(5 minutes)*

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Review the workshop. You may want to re-read each of the Bible Study texts and walk through each activity, filling out handouts ahead of time for your own enrichment and as examples.

- Photocopy handouts:
 - Evangelism and Discipleship in Youth Ministry
 - An Evangelism/Discipleship Review of Your Church's Youth Ministry
 - Resources for Further Study
- Print the workshop outline on newsprint or a wallboard.
- Plan examples for “The Evangelism/Discipleship Circle” (Section III, Handout A).
- Print out the following statements on newsprint (or Power Point slide):
 1. Youth ministry is everything the church does with and for youth; everything youth do in and through the church.
 2. All youth ministry is either evangelism or discipleship; if it is not one or the other, then it is not youth ministry.
- Gather materials:
 - Newsprint
 - Marking pens
 - Tape
 - Bibles

CONDUCTING THE WORKSHOP

I Introduction and Overview (*15 minutes*)

Welcome participants to the workshop and ask participants to share their names, churches and the roles they have in youth ministry.

Next ask the participants what event, activity or tradition from their current youth ministry setting that comes to mind when you say the words “Evangelism and Discipleship.” Invite sharing, allowing 30–60 seconds for each participant to tell about what came to mind, depending on the size of the group. Explain that there will be time later on to share more in depth and try to keep participants to the time–frame since learning to respect time and not monopolize discussion is a good secondary lesson for church folks.

Explain the purpose of the workshop and review the outline from the newsprint or wallboard.

II Two Statements about Youth Ministry (25 minutes)

Invite participants to join groups of three and discuss their reactions to the statements about youth ministry, encouraging them to consider if they agree with one more than the other or if they think both are right. Ask: *If you had to choose one to affirm over the other, which one would it be?*

1. Youth ministry is everything the church does with and for youth; everything youth do in and through the church.
2. All youth ministry is either evangelism or discipleship; if it is not one or the other, then it is not youth ministry.

Reconvene and ask the groups to summarize their discussions.

Point out that, although the statements may appear to be contradictory, it is possible that they may both be true because the first is about *program* and the second is about the *purpose* of youth ministry. The first statement affirms that a wide variety of activities may be part of a church youth ministry, more than the youth group, and can include church school, involvement in worship, relationships between adults and youth in the church, participation of youth on boards and committees, and countless other activities. The second statement is a theological statement that suggests that no matter what activities we have, evangelism or discipleship must be their ultimate purpose. Explain that the theological concern is the central focus of this workshop with exploration of program implications coming later on.

III Presentation of the Evangelism/Discipleship Circle (30 minutes)

Distribute Handout A and review the descriptions of evangelism and discipleship. Next, work through the various segments of the Evangelism/Discipleship Circle, using the following information. The identified texts will be reviewed during the Bible study.

- **Introduction:** The circle is a rubric designed to present the key elements (not all, but the most important elements for youth ministry) of evangelism and discipleship in youth ministry. There is, of course, overlap among the various elements.

- **Outer Circle—Evangelism:**
 - *Presentation of the Gospel* focuses on the importance of sharing the Good News in both word and action. It also suggests that the Christian life is one in which we experience both the grace and responsibilities that Christ presents to us. An illustration of this element can be found in the story of Paul in Athens (Acts 17:22–34).

 - *Clarifying and Interpreting* suggests that hearing the gospel is not enough. There is a need to dig deeper, to question and to probe before it is possible to make a commitment. An illustration of this element can be found in the story of the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:26–37).

 - *Encouraging and Challenging to Accept Christ* recognizes that decisions need to be made freely, without coercion or manipulation. Encouragement and challenge, however, are essential in youth ministry. An illustration of this element can be found in Timothy 4:1–5.

- **Inner Circle—Discipleship:**
 - *Deepening Spiritual Life* suggests the importance of continuing to deepen the personal relationship with Christ, privately and in the context of the faith community, especially through worship, as the foundation for everything else the disciple does. Acts 2:46–47 tells of the importance of the spiritual life for members of the early church.

 - *Training and Equipping* points to the necessity of developing knowledge and skills to live out discipleship, including the Bible (how it came to us, content, and skills for interpretation), basic Christian doctrine, and practical skills, such as planning, working with groups, and serving in

leadership roles in the church. Ephesians 4:11–13 speaks of the importance of disciples being equipped.

- *Ministering* highlights the importance of putting the word into action through service, mission, social action, and leadership within the church, the community and the world. James 1:22–25 issues the call to be doers of the Word.

- **Conclusion:** The reality for most churches is that they do evangelism and discipleship at the same time and even through the same events. This is quite possible since an event that may include worship, study, or action for a person who has made an initial faith commitment can also be a means of presenting the gospel to those who have not yet made such a commitment. *It is important in using the circle to remember that it is only a tool, a heuristic device that helps us look at the elements of evangelism and discipleship in isolation.* The distinctions between the two activities are not rigid.

Check for questions about the presentation thus far.

IV Bible Study (30 minutes)

If there are twelve or more participants, divide into six small groups and assign each group one of the Bible passages from the circle:

Acts 17:22–34	Timothy 4:1–5	Ephesians 4:11–13
Acts 8:26–37	Acts 2:46–47	James 1:22–25

If there are fewer than twelve, move into groups of two or three and divide the six Bible passages among the small groups.

Give the participants 15 minutes to read the assigned passage(s) and discuss the insights it offers about the element it accompanies in the circle.

Reconvene and ask each group to share their insights. When all the small groups have reviewed their insights, invite additional observations from the participants.

V Evangelism and Discipleship in My Church's Youth Ministry (*30 minutes*)

If there are several members from the same church present, ask them to work together. Distribute Handout B and review the chart, pointing out the six elements of youth ministry. Share the following example or an example from your personal experience:

At our church, we have a fall youth retreat, which has become a very important tradition for the group. We spend Friday night through Sunday afternoon at a retreat house about an hour from home. At this retreat we have a lot of fun carving pumpkins, playing flag football, going on a nature hike and a hay ride, and enjoying campfire time. The youth have small groups and also experience a three hour period of solitary reflection and journaling. On Sunday morning, the small groups each plan a part of the shared worship service that brings our time together to a close. Many of our youth have made initial faith commitments at this event and for many others, it has been a special time of spiritual growth.

Invite participants to identify the elements of evangelism and discipleship that are present in the described activity. (They will soon see that this one event includes efforts in almost every category.)

Give participants about 8 minutes to review their church's current youth ministry program from the perspective of each element and note on the handout those activities that are related to each element. When they have completed this step, ask them to review and note:

- Surprises: What elements are more prominent than expected? Which are less prominent?
- Gaps: What do they need to enhance?
- Over-emphases: How might they change their efforts for more balance?

Divide participants into groups of 3 or 4 so that they are in groups with persons who are not from their own churches. Invite them to work together to help develop strategies for filling in the gaps in their churches. Each participant suggests the element he or she would like to enhance and the group brainstorms

and the group spends about 4 minutes to offer a variety of possibilities for each person. They are not developing complete programs. Nor should they be evaluating each other's suggestions.

Note: The purpose in forming groups of persons from different churches is to bring an outside perspective. As an alternative, persons from the same church stay together, however, the outside perspective can often be very helpful.

VI Closing (5 minutes)

Reconvene and invite questions or pressing concerns that can be addressed by the group or informally following the workshop. Distribute Handout C, "Resources for Further Exploration."

Invite participants to spontaneously complete the following sentences as you call out beginning phrases:

I discovered . . .

I was surprised . . .

I wish we had . . .

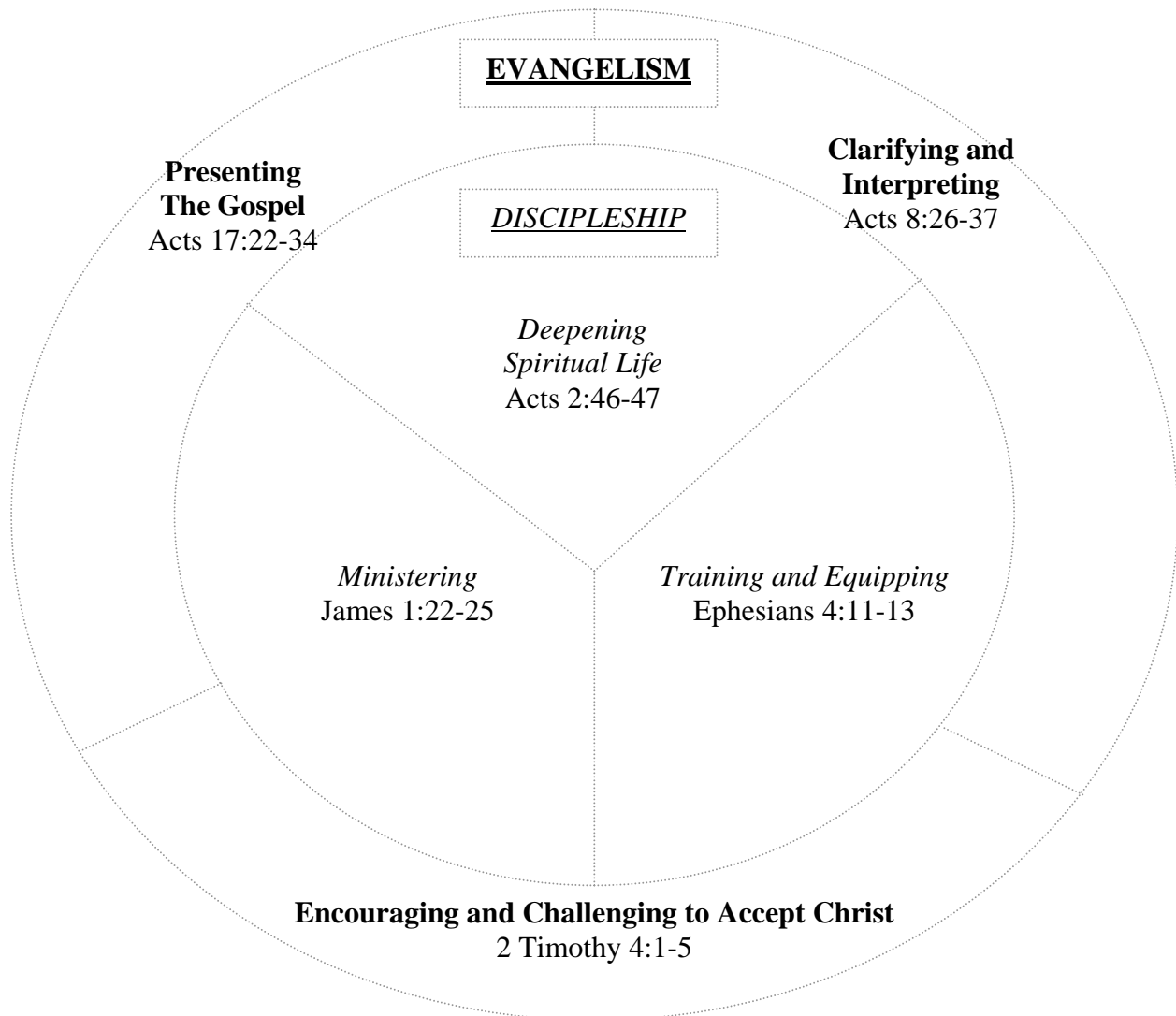
I am going to . . .

Offer a prayer of thanks for the shared work and discernment, and a word of dedication for the ministries of the participants and for the youth they serve.

Evangelism and Discipleship in Youth Ministry

In *evangelism*, the church reaches out to youth who have not yet made a commitment to Jesus, to presenting the gospel and encouraging faith decisions.

In *discipleship*, the church ministers with youth who have made a commitment to Jesus Christ, helping them to live out their commitments and to grow in the faith.



Evangelism:

- *Presentation of the Gospel* focuses on the importance of sharing the Good News in both word and action. It also suggests that the Christian life is one in which we experience both the grace and responsibilities that Christ presents to us. An illustration of this element can be found in the story of Paul in Athens (Acts 17:22–34).
- *Clarifying and Interpreting* suggests that hearing the gospel is not enough. There is a need to dig deeper, to question and to probe before it is possible to make a commitment. An illustration of this element can be found in the story of the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:26–37).
- *Encouraging and Challenging to Accept Christ* recognizes that decisions need to be made freely, without coercion or manipulation. Encouragement and challenge, however, are essential in youth ministry. An illustration of this element can be found in Timothy 4:1–5.

Discipleship:

- *Deepening Spiritual Life* suggests the importance of continuing to deepen the personal relationship with Christ, privately and in the context of the faith community, especially through worship, as the foundation for everything else a the disciple does. Acts 2:46–47 tells of the importance of the spiritual life for members of the early church.
- *Training and Equipping* points to the necessity of developing knowledge and skills to live out discipleship, including the Bible (how it came to us, content, and skills for interpretation), basic Christian doctrine, and practical skills, such as planning, working with groups, and serving in leadership roles in the church. Ephesians 4:11–13 speaks of the importance of disciples being equipped.
- *Ministering* highlights the importance of putting the word into action through service, mission, social action, and leadership within the church, the community and the world. James 1:22–25 issues the call to be doers of the Word.

An Evangelism/Discipleship Review of Your Church's Youth Ministry

Examples include worship, Bible study, one-on-one conversations, special events, intergenerational events, mission trips, testimony, prayer, spiritual exercises, and rites of passage.

EVANGELISM		
Presenting the Gospel	Clarifying/Interpreting	Encouragement to Accept Christ
<i>We do this by</i>		
<i>We could</i>		
DISCIPLESHIP		
Spiritual Life	Training/Equipping	Ministry
<i>We do this by</i>		
<i>We could</i>		

Resources for Further Exploration

- *Call Waiting: God's Invitation to Youth*, Larry L. McSwain and Kay Wilson Shurden (Judson Press, 2005). A resource to help youth explore the nature of “call,” personal giftedness, and ways to live in faithfulness.
- *Bookmarks: Bible Explorations for Older Youth*, Volumes 1–6, J. Thomas Son and Sandra DeMott Hasenauer, ed. (Judson Press, 1999–2001). An excellent series for Sunday school or Bible Study.
- *Bridges of Promise: Taking Steps to Follow Jesus*, Revised Edition, Franklin W. Nelson. (Judson Press, 2001) Uses group guided and self-guided exercises to help children and youth (ages: 8–14) make a first-time faith commitment.
- *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, Mark Yaconelli (Youth Specialties, 2006). An excellent resource that may completely transform the culture and practices of your church's youth ministry.
- *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach (Youth Ministry Alternatives)*, David White (Pilgrim, 2005)
- *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest of a Passionate Church*, Kenda Creasy Dean (Eerdmans Publishing Group, 2004). A holistic, transformational resource for discipleship and evangelism ministry with youth.
- *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*, Kenda Creasy Dean (Upper Room Books, 1998).
- *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*, Dorothy C. Bass. (Upper Room Books, 2001). Downloadable leader's guide available at www.waytolive.org
- *We Are Baptists: Studies for Youth*, Debra L. Sutton (Judson Press, 2001).

Websites

www.nationalministries.org—connect to denominational youth resources
www.judsonpress.com—resources for youth Sunday school and Bible Study
www.simplyyouthministry.com—Saddleback Church Resources
www.ymsp.org—The Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project
www.youthministry.com—Group youth ministry resources
www.youthspecialites.com—Includes *Youthworker* journal, articles and resources
www.waytolive.org—can be used by youth and youth ministry leaders