

Effective Youth Ministry: Embracing a family-orientated approach

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This article embraces the *Sola Scriptura* approach of the reformed theology. Firstly, the article focuses on the crisis in Youth Ministry, namely its inefficiency in leading young people to Christian maturity. It addressed one of the contributing factors to the crisis: the isolation of youth from the adult world, and particularly from their own parents and the larger church community. From the *Sola Scriptura* principle, a family-orientated approach to effective Youth Ministry is proposed where parents are expected to take responsibility for their children's spiritual growth. The church should then support parents and families in this process. Different role players in a family-orientated Youth Ministry are identified and some new perceptions regarding their different tasks are proposed.

Effektiewe Jeugbediening: Omhelsing van 'n familie-georiënteerde benadering. Hierdie artikel ondersteun die *Sola Scriptura*-benadering van die reformatoriese teologie. Aanvanklik fokus die artikel op die huidige krisis in Jeugbediening, naamlik dat Jeugbediening nie effektief toegepas word om jongmense tot volwasse Christenskap te lei nie. Dit bespreek een van die bydraende faktore tot hierdie krisis: die jeug se isolasie van die volwasse wêreld – spesifiek van hulle eie ouers en die groter kerkgemeenskap. Vanuit 'n *Sola Scriptura*-benadering word 'n familie-georiënteerde benadering tot effektiewe Jeugbediening waar dit van ouers verwag word om verantwoordelikheid vir hulle kinders se geestelike groei te neem, as uitkoms voorgestel. Die kerk behoort dan ouers en families in hierdie proses te ondersteun. Verskillende rolspelers in familie-georiënteerde Jeugbediening word geïdentifiseer en 'n paar nuwe insigte aangaande hulle verskillende take word voorgestel.

Introduction

The article is written from a practical theological perspective, using Osmer's model as research guideline (Osmer 2008:4; 2009:7). The *Sola Scriptura* foundational doctrinal principle of the Protestant Reformation, which is held by the reformed theology, was brought into account. *Sola Scriptura* entails the belief that Scripture is the final and only infallible authority for the Christian in all matters of faith and practice. Other authorities are fallible and must always be tested by, and submit to, Scripture (cf. Patton 2009). From the *Sola Scriptura* principle, a family-orientated Youth Ministry is proposed, where it is expected from the parents to take responsibility for their children's spiritual growth. The church should support parents and families in this process. This article identifies the different role players in family-orientated Youth Ministry and aim to propose some new perceptions regarding their different roles.

Definition of Youth Ministry

In this article, the term *youth* supposes a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood, and the awareness of interdependence as members of a community. Youth is thus a more fluid category than a fixed age group. This leads to the understanding of 'Youth Ministry' in this article as the spiritual ministry of leading young people, who find themselves in this transition period from childhood to adulthood (cf. UNESCO 2014), from a Christian perspective. Nel (2005:13) describes Youth Ministry in its essence as a discipline within practical theology (as in many other parts of the world). It is mainly a ministry where it is attempted to cultivate a relationship with God: listening to the one and only unique God in Christ and talking to him, calling him Father.

Objectives

The motivation for writing this article is that traditional Youth Ministry is in a crisis as it does not succeed in leading the youth to mature spiritual adulthood in the long run (Barna 2000; Nel 2001:3; DeVries 2004:21, 24; cf. Shafer 2008:6; Smith & Snell 2009:259; Dean 2010:3, 24). This article

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aims to show how this current crisis of Youth Ministry could be addressed. The crisis answers Osmer's descriptive question: 'What is going on?' Alarmingly, the answer to this question is directly opposite to the answer to Osmer's normative question: 'What ought to be going on?' (Osmer 2008:4; 2009:7). Thus, instead of Youth Ministry leading the youth in a spiritual relationship closer to God, which would be in line with the purpose of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:16–20, the current crisis in Youth Ministry proves the outcome to be the direct opposite, namely that young adults are alienated from God.

The first objective of this article is to find the reason(s) for this crisis in Youth Ministry, which will be achieved by answering Osmer's interpretive question: 'Why is this going on?' The contributing factor to the current crisis in traditional Youth Ministry that has been identified and focused on in this article (there are quite a few contributing factors) is the isolation of teenagers from the adult world – particularly from their own parents (cf. Nel 2001:3; DeVries 2004:21, 24; Dean 2010:24).

In the remainder of this article this cause will be addressed and a possible solution will be proposed by answering Osmer's pragmatic question: 'How might we respond?' This will be done by proposing a family-orientated Youth Ministry, identifying the different role players and elaborating on their specific roles.

Traditional Youth Ministry

Traditional Youth Ministry can be described as Youth Ministry being practised as an independent ministry, leading to the isolation of the youth from the larger church community and their parents (Nel 2001:3, 8; DeVries 2004:21, 24; cf. Dean 2010:21, 24). Nel (2001:3, 8) stresses this characteristic of isolation of traditional Youth Ministry and calls it 'autonomous Youth Ministry'.

Traditional Youth Ministry has thus little to do with a certain tradition, style, programming or personality, but rather with the place of the youth in the community of faith (DeVries 2004:21). The independence of traditional Youth Ministry has led to the notion that attending a youth programme has become a substitute for participation in the church (cf. Dunn & Senter III 1997:492–493).

Currently, traditional Youth Ministry is in a crisis (Senter III 2001; Strommen & Hardel 2008:16–17), which entails that Youth Ministry today is not effective in leading the church youth to mature Christian adulthood (Barna 2000; cf. Nel 2001:3; DeVries 2004:21; Shafer 2008:6; Smith & Snell 2009:259; Dean 2010:3, 24).

All communities, countries and denominations have been affected by this traditional Youth Ministry approach – some only sooner than others (Nel 2001:3, 8). The current state of Youth Ministry in South Africa is thus not unique.

This 'traditional approach to Youth Ministry' resulted in a worldwide loss of youths for Christ (Nel 2001:8; cf. DeVries 2004:103). In order to effectively pass on faith from generation to generation, Strommen and Hardel (2008:19) propose that the home and church must be in partnership.

Rethinking Youth Ministry

It is evident from the Bible that God desires every human being, including every adolescent and child, to be saved and to be in a personal relationship with him (cf. Jn 17:3; cf. Dean 2004:xii). In Matthew we find the Great Commission where Jesus Christ said:

All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth [...] go therefore and make disciples of all nations [...] teaching them everything that I [Christ] have commanded you. (Mt 28:16–20, NIV)

From a *Sola Scriptura* viewpoint, it is important that Youth Ministry should be Christ-centric, as Christ told the disciples to teach people everything that he (Christ) told them.¹ Furthermore, it is without a doubt evident from the Bible that Youth Ministry has a place and purpose within the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Proposing a family-orientated Youth Ministry

Long before God instituted his church, he created the family. Anderson (2007:189) aptly remarks that within the first few chapters of Genesis God starts operating from a 'family context' – and this family operandi continues in the New Testament. He concludes that 'God is family'. Richardson (1996:15) remarks that God created the family and that the family model he instituted, is the way he wants us to understand and define the concept of family.

Already at the very beginning in the Old Testament God instituted marriage when he created Adam and Eve with the capacity to reproduce after their own kind. The family unit usually consisted of the husband, wife and their children (Gn 2:19–24; cf. Richardson 1996:15).

In the New Testament God actually commands the church to be 'like a family', saying that the church is part of his household (Eph 2:19; cf. 1 Tm 3:15). Jesus calls each to be his brother and sister – he makes brothers and sisters of all who come to him. All who believe in God and in the work of Jesus Christ is called family and are part of the household of God (1 Tm 3:15; Heb 2:11). The basic concepts that reveal God's desire for families are an intimate relationship: firstly with God and then also with one another (Gn 4:9; Ec 4:10; Jn 13:34–35; 15:12; Gl 6:1). In the family context, God always needs to come first (Eph 6:2–4; Jn 15:12; Mt 6:33; 10:37–39; cf. Strommen & Hardel 2008:17–18). According to the Bible, a strong family needs to build and maintain these two key relationships: a strong family relationship and a strong

1. See also Strong's article titled *Christ Alone ... Redeeming Youth Ministry* (accepted for publishing in 2014 by *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*) for an in-depth discussion on a Christ-centric theological message for effective Youth Ministry.

relationship with God. A strong and life-shaping family will be characterised by these two kinds of relationships (cf. Mt 10:37–39; Strommen & Hardel 2008:18).

God commanded parents to teach their children his Word, as Nel (2001) wisely indicates:

Parents are primary mediators in the relationship (or covenant) between God and families, and as such are key in the roles that humans play in the coming of God to children. (p. 12)

This principle of parents being primary mediators in the relationship between God and families is boldly proclaimed in the Word of God. According to Deuteronomy 11:19 (NIV), God commanded parents to teach their children the Word of God when he said: 'Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.'

Ministry was never meant to happen without the context of family. Each time a ministry is formed and it is not operating from a family framework with the mission to empower and enrich family life, it will not be successful as God himself is family-'orientated' (cf. Anderson 2007:188). God is ministry, and his ministry is relational, unitive, creative, redemptive and curative – and characterised by love (Stevens 1999:141; cf. Olthuis 2012:7).

No wonder that the lasting results of the youth ministries of the past decades were so few and far between – and hence also the isolation of youth. As was mentioned earlier in this article, DeVries (2004:21) showed the isolation of youth from adults, in particular their parents, as one of the main reasons why Youth Ministry was virtually without success in the past (cf. Dean 2010:24; Strommen & Hardel 2008:19; Nel 2001:3, 8).

This characteristic of God as a 'family God' is of extreme importance when we need to find a new orientation for Youth Ministry. It is clear that traditional Youth Ministry were wrong to separate the youth from the rest of the church as well as from the nuclear family. From a *Sola Scriptura* point of view, this article thus proposes a family-orientated Youth Ministry.

A family-orientated Youth Ministry and its different role players

Effective Youth Ministry embraces a family-orientated approach, which entails that parents are expected to take responsibility for their children's spiritual growth, whilst the church supports parents and families in this process (cf. DeVries 2004:175; Nel 2001:4–5). The different role players of a family-orientated Youth Ministry are parents, youth workers, the congregation and the youth. Role players in this case can therefore be all the different groups of people who have a part in Youth Ministry and making it a team effort.

Embracing a family-orientated approach addresses the problem of the current pattern of isolation in autonomous or traditional Youth Ministry (Nel 2001:3; cf. Senter III 2001:xi).

Nel (2001:4–5) remarks that youths are the responsibility of parents, youth leaders, elders, deacons, the congregation as well as the responsibility of one another. This responsibility is inalienable and not transferable. The different roles each of these parties play in effective Youth Ministry will be discussed below.

Role of parents in effective Youth Ministry

First and foremost, it is important to be reminded that the responsibility to raise children as mature spiritual adults is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents and not of the church, or specifically in this case, the Youth Ministry (Eph 6:4; 2 Tm 1:5; 3:15; cf. Nel 2001:12; Barna 2007:25; Schlect 2007:3). DeVries (2004:10) uses a very familiar African saying in order to bring this point across: 'It takes a village to raise a child.' The first village for every human being is the family of origin. Strommen and Hardel (2008:90) stress the importance that parents need to help develop, sustain and pass on a Gospel-oriented faith to their children. They continue to say that God has placed children initially in the hands of their parents (cf. Strommen & Hardel 2008:142). Anderson (2007:23) states that parents are God's covenant partners.

Children are a special gift from God to their parents and need to be raised by them as people serving God with all their hearts, souls, strength and minds (Ps 127:3–5; Dt 6:5–9; cf. Barna 2007:xiii, xviii; Mueller 2007:14; Dunn & Senter III 1997:496; Nel 2001:12). Children are a gift from God, given to us as a sign of God's favour. Because God values them so highly, so must we (Mueller 2007:14).

One of the classic quotes of James Dobson (n.d.), founder and chairman emeritus of *Focus on the Family*, stresses the responsibility of parents to raise their children with godly values. He stated (Dobson n.d.; cf. Boteach 2006:177):

Children are not casual guests in our home. They have been loaned to us temporarily for the purpose of loving them and instilling a foundation of values on which their future lives will be built.

Mueller (2007:435) has the same idea that children need parents who will help them discover the real meaning of love by demonstrating it in their homes – they should be loved unconditionally (cf. Boteach 2006:72).

Boteach (2006:20) says that he believes the most primary role of parents is to protect their children, to make sure that they are safe: physically, emotionally and spiritually. Children should be allowed to be children as long as possible.

Mueller (2007:432) writes that parenting should be redemptive. He elaborates on this statement by saying that in situations where a child makes a mistake, parents need to redeem the situation by turning the mistake into an opportunity for the child to be a more Christ-like person.

In his book, Barna (2007) divides parents in two groups: *revolutionary parents* and *typical parents*. According to Barna

(2007:xv), revolutionary parents are those who understand that their role is to guide their children to understand the principles and outcomes that honour God and advance his purposes. Success in this regard is measured by the transformed lives of children. On the other hand, typical parents, according to the research done by The Barna Group, are parents who have no plan for the spiritual development of their children, do not consider it a priority, have little or no training in how to nurture a child's faith, have no related standards or goals that they are seeking to satisfy, and experience no accountability for their efforts (The Barna Group 2009).

Barna (2007:56) states that his research showed that one of the characteristics of revolutionary parents is that they put a high premium on the spiritual development of their children. Mueller (2007:440) says that parents need to leave a spiritual heritage to their children – children need to be taught and shown that God occupies centre stage in their parents' lives and home. This will be accomplished through prayers, spiritual discussions and family devotions, and by setting a godly example as parents (Mueller 2007:440).

The most fascinating fact is that this research showed that revolutionary parents see themselves as the primary spiritual developers of their children and that the church and school should only reinforce the spiritual lessons that were taught at home. Revolutionary parents thus have a biblical view regarding the spiritual development of their children and their responsibility concerning this important matter. Barna's research further showed that one of the fascinating differences between revolutionary parents and typical parents are their reaction towards their church's youth leaders. Revolutionary parents are interested in the content the youth leaders teach their children, how they conduct the experience and how they would interact with the parents. If they were not satisfied with the standard of the Youth Ministry, they would remove their child from the group or release pressure on him or her to attend regularly. In contrast, typical parents did not care what their children were taught in youth groups, as long as they attended (Barna 2007:57).

Revolutionary parents realise the important responsibility of raising their children in tandem with God. Strommen and Hardel (2008) conclude:

Children and youth tend to adopt the values and beliefs of their parents. If the parents embrace the beliefs and values of a Gospel-oriented faith, the children will adopt them. (p. 89)

Mueller (2007:422), on the other hand, reminds us that even if parents do everything right, there is still no guarantee that their children will grow up to be spiritually healthy. Children will at a certain point make their own choice regarding God (cf. Dean 2004:xiii).

Parents need to realise that they cannot force their children to love, honour and obey God. It is the Holy Spirit who convinces unbelievers of sin and calls them to faith (Eph 3:17; Jn 6:44).

Often parents want to bring up their children in a moralising way and expect it also from youth leaders (cf. Cole 2012). Parents should be constantly alert not to moralise their children, as children can easily associate the Gospel with laws and regulations instead of a love relationship with Christ. It is of utmost importance that parents should trust Holy Spirit to let their children grow spiritually, as it is only God who can let them grow (1 Cor 3:6–21). Parents' responsibilities are to sow seeds of grace and water it, whilst demonstrating a relationship with God from a love and grace perspective. As Mueller (2007:423) stated: 'Parents can't carry their children kicking and screaming into the kingdom of God.' Parents need to set a godly example to their children, but ultimately they need to rely on God for the spiritual growth of their children (cf. Mueller 2007:423; Cole 2012).

Role of youth leaders in effective Youth Ministry

In order to build an effective Youth Ministry it is important to define the role of such a ministry's youth workers.

Youth leaders should demonstrate a personal love relationship with Christ

Youth Ministry needs youth workers who dwell in the presence of God and are willing to walk with them on the journey, regardless of how often they are prone to personal detours, says King (2006:11).

Youth leaders cannot be atheological about life and ministry (cf. Dunn & Senter III 1997:50). They can learn a great deal from the way Jesus taught and dealt with people when he was on earth. He lived differently. He was teaching a whole new world order through the way he lived – his words only magnified and confirmed what he lived, and not the other way around. Christ did not only talk the talk, he also walked the talk (cf. Barna 2006:77).

Youth leaders should not only teach youth the Bible – knowledge of the Bible alone will not change their lives. It is not enough to give people information and then demand change. The lives of youth leaders and parents need to be saturated with the love and intimacy they have for Christ. This demonstration of intimacy and love with Christ will play part in driving the youth right into the arms of the Father. Sweney (2011:100) put it beautifully when he said: 'Transformed lives transform lives.'

Youth leaders should be passionate about the youth and dedicated to them

Youth leaders need to be passionate about the youth as human beings and not get caught up in the 'prestige' of youth leaders. They should be dedicated to walk the spiritual path with young people together with their parents. Youth Ministry should not be seen as a stepping stone towards a higher rank in the church. It should rather be valued as a very important task – helping parents lead their children in the very first steps in Christian life and a relationship with God. Youth leaders need to be really interested in the youth, valuing their contribution to society, and should be willing

to listen and be a part of their lives (cf. Roebben 2005:27–30). Leaders in Youth Ministry should be equipped to observe the experiences of the youth, and they particularly need to learn to adapt to the modes of expression that young people have developed (Roebben 2005:27). As the old saying goes: ‘People don’t care unless they know you care.’

Youth leaders need to know that they are planters

Every minister wants to see good results in his or her ministry – it is the same in Youth Ministry (cf. Cole 2012). A youth leader can easily fall into the trap of behaviour modification instead of sharing the Gospel with young people. This will lead young people to understand the Gospel as a set of rules of right and wrong that needs to be outwardly performed instead of understanding the Good News as grace, having a love relationship with God and knowing that Holy Spirit will work sanctification in their hearts (cf. Cole 2012). However, in Youth Ministry it should be about planting good seeds of grace in the lives of young people and watering it, allowing Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit. Mark Upton, a former youth worker and current pastor at Hope Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, proposes the following wise words as slogan for every youth minister: ‘If anyone asks you about your ministry, tell them you will let them know in ten years’ (cf. Cole 2012). He adds: ‘Youth pastors need to view themselves as sowers, planting Gospel seeds for harvest down the road’ (cf. 1 Cor 3:6–8).

Assisting parents in children’s spiritual development

The results of the ‘Effective Christian Education’ study proved that the most influential people in shaping the youth’s faith life are by far their parents – not even pastors or teachers ranked close to parents in this poll (Strommen & Hardel 2008:90). Unfortunately, research shows that a large majority of believers rely on the church, rather than their family to train their children to become spiritually mature (Barna 2006:35).

Youth leaders and youth workers must become collaborators with parents as well as their youth. They must ‘encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone’ (1 Th 5:14; cf. Dunn & Senter III 1997:514). Revolutionary parents do not see themselves as parents raising their children in a vacuum (Barna 2007:58). They realise that in the functioning of the body of Christ each member has a different calling and that the youth pastor or ministry can be of assistance in the discipleship of their children.

Youth Ministry with the correct values will realise the importance of involving and interacting with parents, helping them to raise their children to spiritual maturity (cf. DeVries 2004:9–10). It is very important to provide opportunities for teens and parents to interact, and to gain parental involvement in Youth Ministry, according to DeVries (2004:17).

It is clear that Youth Ministry can be a helping hand for parents in the discipleship process of their children.

Empowering parents to be spiritual leaders of their home

Youth Ministry workers need to understand that, in order to be effective in their role, it is important to give the leadership and primary responsibility of raising children to spiritual maturity back to parents, as God intended it to be. DeVries (2004:9–10) argues that the most substantial Youth Ministry with the utmost positive results is the ministry that relates to young men and women as members of families. Strommen and Hardel (2008:269) note that parents play a vital role in establishing family relationships as well as how the family relates to God.

According to Schlect (2007:3), a part of the problem of the flawed concept of Youth Ministry is the fact that the church is not expecting enough from parents and their children. Only when the church respects, involves and empowers parents in the process of guiding children spiritually Youth Ministry will be successful in the long run. Instead of taking the responsibility off the shoulders of parents to raise their children in the ways of God, it is rather the church’s responsibility to train and empower parents as spiritual leaders in order to be the primary spiritual coaches for their children. Barna (2006:35) magnifies this need when he states that most Christian parents do not believe they are doing a good job at facilitating the spiritual development of their children. Strommen and Hardel (2008:142) say that parents need to be taught how to connect with their children through the sharing of Scripture stories, and also how to pray with their children.

Only when parents feel empowered as spiritual leaders they will have the courage to take up their responsibility as spiritual leaders of their homes in the same way that they take up the responsibility as primary caretakers of their children in all other facets of life. Parents need to realise that this is the way that God intended it from the very beginning.

Role of the congregation in effective Youth Ministry

The congregation is seen and valued as the larger faith family of effective Youth Ministry. The Church is a ‘family of families’ (cf. Anderson & Guernsey 1985; Anderson 2007:176). This concept can only be viewed in a similar way the Bible speaks of the body of Christ as a ‘household’ of God or the ‘temple’ of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tm 3:14–15; 1 Jn 3:1; cf. Anderson 2007:176). The different parts are connected to one another, and together they make up the body of Christ and function as it. In the same way, Youth Ministry is an integral part of the larger congregation. Nel (2001:4) writes that the youth forms an integral part of the congregation as an entity and the entity is never completed without Youth Ministry. Youth leaders need to remind and motivate the congregation that they are important in Youth Ministry to ultimately act as the family of God – stretching out their arms to the youth in love and healing, and carry them in prayer. The congregation should overload the youth in grace and not with a judging attitude when they are in the wrong, knowing that they are still young Christians. The ideal relationship between

the youth, youth leaders and the congregation will result in connecting the identity and work of God with the caring work of the church (cf. Purves 2004:xxvii).

Role of the youth in effective Youth Ministry

The youth is responsible for one another in the sense that they care for each other and help each other where possible (cf. Nel 2001:4–5; Gn 4:9; Ec 4:10). In order to minister effectively to the youth, it is very important to understand the essence of who they are and how to create a safe haven for them.

What follows is in no way a complete summary, but rather an attempt to highlight the most important characteristics of who the youth are and what they need.

The youth's childhood needs to be preserved and protected

Childhood innocence is under assault. Medved and Medved (1998) describe it powerfully as follows:

The very idea of parental protectiveness has been overwhelmed by relentless pressure from a society that seems determined to expose its young to every perversion and peril in an effort to 'prepare' them for a harsh, dangerous future. (p. 3)

Boteach (2006:35) agrees with the above description when he indicates that we need to shield our youth from the increasingly malign cultural influences that subtly but constantly persuade our children to skip childhood (cf. Dobson 2012:12).

Medved and Medved (1998:5) remark that Marie Winn wrote in her book, *Children Without Childhood* (1981), that civilisation has recently swiftly shifted its attitude regarding nurturing the young. She states that instead of struggling to preserve children's innocence, a belief was born that children must be exposed to adult experiences early in their lives in order to survive in an increasingly complex world. She says that the 'age of protection' has ended and an 'age of preparation' has set in. As indicted by Medved and Medved (1998) 17 years after Winn's book was written, this preparation model of childhood appeared to be an appalling failure. This was evident in the increase in youth suicides, crimes conducted by children, drug use, sexual activities before the age of 18, youth having sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies (Medved & Medved 1998).

Our children need to be protected – it is a duty we cannot shrink from. Children of all ages are crying out to be taken care of (Boteach 2006:37). Children need the security of defined limits. They may not admit that they want their parents to be in charge, but they breathe easier when their parents are protecting them and setting the boundaries (Dobson 2012:9).

Dunn and Senter III (1997:509) remark that it is sad that parents today want their children to grow up quickly. In killing innocence, families, teachers, clerics and neighbours are often unwittingly attacking something precious – killing something irreplaceable. In the process of destroying

innocence, they could actually be creating the ominous world for which they are trying to prepare their youngsters for (Medved & Medved 1998:16).

Parents need to protect children from adult programming on the television. Yet, almost four out of every 10 children have parents who do not really know what they are watching (Dobson 2012:12). Social research conducted by Yankelovich Partners Inc., who analysed the television viewing habits of Americans, discovered that 42% of children between ages 9 and 17 have their own cable or satellite television hookups in their bedrooms (Dobson 2012:12). Dobson (2012:12) correctly asserts regarding these statistics: 'Considering the explicit sex, violence, nudity, and profanity available now, especially on cable and satellite television, this is a disturbing revelation.'

Boteach (2006:34–35) writes that if we treat our children like young adults we are allowing them to miss their childhood – a stage that is absolutely essential to provide them with a strong foundation for adulthood. Dunn and Senter III (1997:512–513) say that many of today's teenagers are left to parent themselves – many of them are either coming from broken homes or from homes where both parents are working away from home. Children's innocence can only be protected if their parents safeguard it – by raising their children rather than forcing them to raise themselves (Boteach 2006:35; cf. Medved & Medved 1998:15). Boteach (2006:38) explicitly says: 'In a world where there are no parents, there can be no children.'

Youth leaders need to support parents in embracing their role as protectors and guardians in order to ensure that the youth of the day grow up to be well-mannered, intellectually curious and spiritually secure.

The youth needs to be taught to embrace their childhood and enjoys it, as the teacher in Ecclesiastes (cf. Ec 3:1–8) says: '[T] here is a time for everything.' Facing this responsibility is the first step in fighting the encroachment on the innocence of our children (Medved & Medved 1998:15).

Providing the youth with a safe haven

The best conditions in which struggling adolescents can grow, occur when they feel they are accepted unconditionally – they know that they are with someone who is trustworthy and real, and experience that they are deeply understood (Dunn & Senter III 1997:520). Boteach (2006:38) notes that when you provide the youth with a safe haven, they will lack self-consciousness, which is a characteristic of childhood.

It is very important for youth leaders (and parents) to remember that in order to relate to a teenager, one does not need to act like one (Dunn & Senter III 1997:520; cf. Boteach 2006:38).

Channelling the youth's passion

Passion is one of the strongest emotions known to man, and it is at its peak during adolescence (Daily 2013). Whatever

adolescents do in life, it is usually done with great passion and enthusiasm. Dean (2004:6) states that every stage of the life cycle brings certain human characteristics to the fore, and identifies passion as one of these qualities in adolescence. It is thus of utmost importance to channel the passion of the youth in the right direction so that it leads to the glorification of God.

Dean (2004:6) explains that although the frontal brain lobes that govern reason and judgement continue to develop into adulthood, the emotional centres of the brain are nearly mature by adolescence, giving teenagers their propensity for leading with their hearts. One could say that the adolescent brain is wired for passion. Young people feel it in their bones, proclaim it in their hopes and hormones, and act out its power.

Almost everything the youth do, is usually wired with passion. Dean (2004:6) correctly observes that to live passionately is the mission of the young, the world and, perhaps above all, the church (cf. Daily 2013). God desires that we will love him with a passionate love, a love that consumes our whole heart, soul and mind – our everything. It is a love that oozes passion in capital letters. The Bible shows that God's desire is that his children will love him zealously (cf. Rm 12:9–13; Pr 23:17). Paul writes to Timothy (2 Tm 1:6, NIV): '[F]an into flame the gift of God.'

Adolescents do not want to suffer, but they desperately want to love something (or someone) worthy of suffering – and to be so loved. They yearn for experiences that will channel their passions (Dean 2004:xi). Young people, who by definition must figure out how to be human, may not realise that their quest for 'a love worth dying for' is a quest for the Love who died for them. It is God's gift of passion that compels them to search for him. For good or for ill, the fire in the youth's loins and the fire in their souls are intimately connected (Dean 2004:xiv–xv). By acknowledging the passion of Christ, the youth's passion will give way to faith in Christ and will be fuelled by the energy of fierce love for him (Dean 2004:2).

There is a deep human longing for authentic love – a longing present in each of us, but it is acute during adolescence (Pascal n.d.; Daily 2013). As Kierkegaard (1985:145) correctly observes, the greatest passion of all human beings is to have faith (cf. Dean 2004:xiv–xv). This truth is stated in the Bible in Colossians 1:16, where it is said that all things were made by God and for God: we (all humans, the youth included) were created to yearn passionately after God.

However, passion needs to be channelled properly. Daily (2013) reminds us of this importance when he says that passion is healthy and a very positive attribute. It is when adolescent passion runs unchecked that unnecessary risks are taken, which can be harmful to adolescent relationships.

Epilogue

The value of this article is that it identifies and addresses one of the contributing factors to the current crisis in Youth

Ministry, namely the isolation of the youth from the larger church community, and particularly from their own parents. Youth Ministry as a family-orientated ministry with different role players is proposed from a *Sola Scriptura* point of view. It entails different role players to work together as a team, making Youth Ministry more effective. The autonomous approach of traditional Youth Ministry is thus completely rejected. Guidelines regarding the different roles of the role players are provided, which aim to provide fresh insights regarding their different tasks. Defining a new framework for Youth Ministry, in order for it to be more effective, brings with it a call for change that will lead the youth to mature Christian adulthood. This article aims to aid in defining a framework for effective Youth Ministry as it proposes a family orientation and teamwork operation instead of an autonomous and isolated approach.

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