

# So, what matters?

## If you've stepped in to youth ministry for the first time, welcome to the adventure of a lifetime!

I say adventure because only God (literally) knows what is coming your way, and lifetime because it is my conviction that in order to be effective you need to think about what you're doing for at least the next 7 years – the 'lifetime' of a teenager (13-19).

I always tell churches they should be focused on 3 things in youth ministry:

1. The development and implementation of an accessible vision – one that's Biblical, contextual, memorable and that connects with the life of the church.
2. The recruitment and training of volunteers – this sounds obvious but you can quickly get overwhelmed by tasks. You are not a superhero, even though many will see you as a saviour. Build a team that has people high in character, willing to learn and see the benefit of long-term investment in young people.
3. The spiritual formation of young people – yes you want to see young people come to know Jesus, but you also want them to grow into mature followers of Jesus. Don't focus on the first and forget the second, and don't focus on the second, only to forget the first.

\* *Youth Ministry That Transforms: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hopes, Frustrations, and Effectiveness of Today's Youth Workers* by Merton P. Strommen, Karen E. Jones, Dave Rahn. Youth Specialties (2001)

## Make no mistake. These are deliberately outlined in this order.

That's all good and well in theory you might be thinking, but what about the practical aspects of what to sink your teeth into? In your first year, you should look to understand your ministry context and the begin to prayerfully make plans for what the coming years hold. This is not to say you do nothing, more specifically keep doing what's been done with an ear and an eye to evaluating its fruitfulness. Change nothing.

## So, who can I call?

When I started in youth ministry I called my Father in Law. Why my Father in Law? Simply because he shared the same name as one of the men God had placed in my life as a bit of a mentor. I called the wrong person out of sheer excitement. Don't get me wrong, I love my Father in Law and he supports me in my role – he just wasn't who I intended on calling on the first day of the job.

So, who should you be calling? Let me group these in the following ways:

1. **Your friends and family** – those God has placed closest to you and who will be with you over the long haul. Let them know what you're doing and how they can help. You're about to embark on late nights, out of your comfort zone experiences, and conversations that you haven't been trained for.
2. **Your local church and its leadership** – you have been appointed to your role by a Baptist congregation and as such you are to report to them. Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. Do I need to say it again? Tell the stories. Tell of the needs. Tell of the answered prayers.
3. **A mentor or coach** – get one. Seriously. This person needs to know your context but not be in your context. Their role is to see further than you do, ask the tough questions, check in on your motivations and challenge you grow.

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## So, what matters? ...continued

4. Baptist Youth Ministries – that’s right we have a supporting and resourcing ‘department’ in our Baptist Association who seeks to know what’s happening on the ground in each of our churches, create networks, and facilitate collaborative projects.
5. Our Baptist Association of Churches – while we are locally autonomous we also believe in working together. Get to know others working in your area. Your Senior Pastor should be able to help you to figure out who these people are, but if you get stuck contact the Baptist Association Office.

While everyone needs a different amount of connection, this is a good start. From here you will no doubt look to other networks to both support and enrich your ministry. The simple message is get connected.

### So, how do I get involved?

Coffee. Well more precisely time with fellow workers. Before we do task, we do people. We make time for one another. Times to share. To dream. To encourage. To pray. We make time to get to know one another, in order that we can spur one another on.

We have sought to develop a yearly rhythm that can be adapted for each local church

MONTH	FOCUS	ASSOCIATION EVENT
January	Holidays and Team Building	
February	New people and culture	BYM State Conference
March	Plan next term and Easter	
April	School Holidays	Promotion of Revive Youth Nights
May	Connect with others	Revive Youth Nights
June	Plan next term and mid-year review	Revive Youth Nights
July	School Holidays	Regional Training
August	Connect with others	Promotion of State Youth Camp
September	Plan next term	State Youth Camp
October	School Holidays	
November	Plan for End of Year and Christmas	Promotion of BYM State Conference
December	Review and Planning	



### So, who else do I need to know?

Google is your friend in many respects but so too are our various websites. The Baptist Association website has a comprehensive list of resources and contacts available as does our Baptist Youth Ministries website.

- **Baptist Association of NSW & ACT**  
[www.nswactbaptists.org.au](http://www.nswactbaptists.org.au)
- **Baptist Youth Ministries**  
[www.baptistyouthministries.org.au](http://www.baptistyouthministries.org.au)
- **Creating Safes Spaces**  
A workshop to show how to run a safe youth ministry.  
[www.creatingsafespaces.org.au](http://www.creatingsafespaces.org.au)
- **Morling College**  
Why not look into some theological study?  
[www.morling.edu.au](http://www.morling.edu.au)