

APPENDIX A

Discussion Questions

Introduction: A Roll of the Dice

1. As you read through *Sustainable Youth Ministry*, who are the others on your team you would like to share the conversation with?
2. When has your youth ministry taken a gambler's approach to building a thriving youth ministry?

Chapter 1: Cracking the Code

1. Look back at the story of your youth ministry over the past ten years. What patterns bubble up?
2. Which of the characteristics of a stuck youth ministry have you seen in your own context?

Chapter 2: The Easy Button

1. Which of the youth ministry normals fit or don't fit your particular ministry?
2. Do the math for your ministry to determine the current baseline capacity of your youth ministry, given the rules of thumb identified in this chapter.

3. What are the biggest obstacles to your church investing at a level that matches its expectations for youth ministry?

Chapter 3: Hoping, Wishing and Praying

1. Review the traits of a church with a superstar mentality and consider which, if any, apply to your church or ministry.
2. How would the leaders of your church respond to the notion of “hiring from within”?
3. Look at the history of your youth staff. Which previous youth staff members stepped into thriving ministries after leaving your church? Who has been sidelined from ministry altogether?

Chapter 4: The Dance Floor

1. After this brief introduction to systems thinking, what questions do you have?
2. Would you say your ministry is more systems focused, or staff or program focused? In what ways?

Chapter 5: Building Right

1. Which of the control documents does your ministry have in place?
2. Which of the visioning documents does your ministry have in place?
3. What prevents your ministry from “squaring the corners” and getting the key structures outlined in this chapter in place?
4. If you had to guess, what is the target number of youth the leaders of your church would like to see involved on an average week?
5. What would a group look like that was perfectly structured to create cliques? That was perfectly structured to create apathy in students? That was perfectly structured for eleventh- and twelfth-graders to drop out?

Chapter 6: Changing Culture

1. If you were to give a weather report of the climate of your current youth ministry, what would that report be?
2. What stories and metaphors define the culture of your youth ministry?
 - a story of a time when “God showed up” in your youth ministry
 - a story of unexpected grace in your youth ministry
 - a story of a student’s unlikely connection to your church

Chapter 7: Searching Right

1. What worked well in your church’s last search for youth staff?
2. If your current youth worker were to resign today, how ready is your church to engage in an effective search and to walk through the transition without losing momentum?
3. In what ways will your next search process have to “start from scratch” and in what ways will it rely on processes developed in previous searches?
4. On your current youth ministry team, who plays the role of the architect? The general contractor? The craftsman?

Chapter 8: Aligning the Heart

1. What are the warning signs that a youth staff person is not doing ministry from an emotionally healthy place?
2. What are the unique stressors on your youth staff as they seek to do youth ministry from an emotionally healthy place?
3. Who can provide support and accountability for the youth staff to maximize the chances of tending to their own souls and not simply to their ministries?

4. Why do some youth workers consider it selfish to set personal boundaries?
5. How would you counsel a youth minister who loves kids so much that he or she is consistently sacrificing his or her own emotional health to do the job?

Chapter 9: Monkeys, Frogs and Balconies

1. How would the leaders of your church respond to a youth staff person taking two to three hours of balcony time away from the office each week?
2. How would you rate your current youth staff's ability to eat frogs and manage ministry monkeys?

Chapter 10: Architecting the Constellation

1. How can your church be more effective in creating a constellation of relationships for each of the youth in your ministry?
2. What are the biggest challenges your ministry faces in developing a team of volunteers to serve in the youth ministry?
3. Who "owns the monkey" of recruiting in your ministry?

Chapter 11: The Magnet Effect

1. If you were to guess, how comfortable would you say that first-timers are in your youth ministry?
2. How often do visiting youth become active participants in your ministry?
3. How often in the previous year have you asked visitors for their impressions of the youth ministry, using questions like these:
 - Overall, how did your experience with our group meet your expectations? Where there any parts that exceeded your expectations? Any that fell below your expectations?

- How likely are you to recommend our group to someone else? Are you very likely . . . very unlikely?
 - How likely are you to want to return to participate in our group again? Are you very likely . . . very unlikely?
4. Which youth in your ministry are the ones most likely to take responsibility for creating a welcoming culture?
 5. Og Mandino argued that “the only certain means of success is to render more and better service than is expected of you, no matter what your task may be.”
 - Does this principle hold true for ministry?
 - How would Jesus respond to this statement?
 - Based on this statement, was Jesus successful?

Chapter 12: Dancing with Alligators

1. What are some of the unspoken rules for how decisions are made in your church?
2. How much “political capital” would you say the current youth ministry has in the larger church?
3. What are some of the surest ways of building “political capital” for the youth ministry?
4. What are the most important expectations your senior pastor has for the youth ministry of your church?

Chapter 13: Rabbit Trails and Brick Walls

1. What are some of the more tempting rabbit trails that might pull your youth ministry off course?
2. What brick walls has your youth ministry run into?

Epilogue: Seizing the Unfair Advantage

1. After having read through the processes of building a sustainable youth ministry, what are the first steps your ministry needs to take?
2. What additional resources—both inside and outside the church—will you need in order to accomplish your church's dreams for its youth ministry?