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CREATIVE COMMUNICATION & DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES



**CREATIVE RESOURCES  
FOR YOUTH MINISTRY**

COMPILED BY WAYNE RICE & MIKE YACONELLI EDITED BY YVETTE NELSON

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**Compiled by Wayne Rice and Mike Yaconelli  
Edited by Yvette Nelson**



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The contents of this book are reprinted with permission from *Tension Getters*, *Tension Getters Two*, and *Amazing Tension Getters*, published by Youth Specialties (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981, 1985, 1988).

The publishing team for this book included Robert P. Stamschror, development editor; Mary Duerson Kraemer, copy editor; Maura C. Goessling, production editor; David Piro, cover designer; pre-press, printing, and binding by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

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Printed in the United States of America

3304

ISBN 978-0-88489-266-3

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# Introduction

## Youth Ministry Today: Its Growth and Development

For the past twenty years, Catholic youth ministry has been in the process of critically re-examining its philosophy, goals, and principles. In part, this re-examination grew out of the perceived and felt needs of young people who will be the adults of the twenty-first century. In the early seventies—before youth ministry, as we know it, existed—those who worked with young people saw a need to experiment with new styles and forms of ministry with young people. Many parishes, schools, and dioceses began to develop youth ministries on the solid foundation of relational ministry and on the unique social and developmental needs of young people. Heretofore they had relied on the unquestioned process of presenting organizational, programmatic approaches such as weekly or biweekly classes, sports programs, or rarely, weekend or overnight retreats.

The new processes and approaches planted and tended during those years produced a renewed ministry with young people based on experience and insight. Leaders in the field of youth ministry discovered that ministry with young people must be a multifaceted, comprehensive, and coordinated effort. They rediscovered the age-old truth of Jesus' ministry: all ministry is rooted in relationships. Through the leaders' outreach and relationship building, young people began to experience the warmth of an accepting community, which is vital for the development of a comprehensive youth ministry. As relationships grew, a sense of belonging and participation also grew. The experience of acceptance, belonging, and participation opened young people so that they were able to reveal the needs and the concerns that preoccupied them. Programs developed around these needs and concerns: service projects, retreats, new forms of catechesis, peer ministry, prayer groups, celebrations of the sacraments. With these rediscovered opportunities for ministry, youth ministers were in a position to help young people grow personally and spiritually and find their place in the faith community as active Catholic Christians with a mission.

As the style of youth ministry changed, the traditional ministry to young people by the community evolved into a fourfold approach. Youth ministry was conceived not only in terms of responding *to* the unique social and developmental needs of young people but also in terms of adults' sharing a common ministry *with* young people, *by*

young people (especially involving their peers), and *for* young people (adults interpreting young people's legitimate concerns and acting as advocates for them). This fourfold understanding—to, with, by, and for—changed the style and broadened the scope of youth ministry.

In 1975 and 1976, hundreds of youth leaders from across the country consulted for fifteen months and concretized the aims and philosophy of youth ministry in a document called *A Vision of Youth Ministry*. It has served to guide the church's mission to young people ever since. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* affirmed the growth that had taken place in youth ministry and challenged the whole church to renew itself.

The document clearly places youth ministry within the framework of the mission and ministry of the church. It defines youth ministry as the "response of the Christian community to the needs of young people, and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community."<sup>1</sup> This reciprocal relationship helps the community to view youth ministry as part of the entire ministry of the community, not separate from it—a problem often encountered when a ministry with young people is perceived as a club or an organization set apart from the mainstream of church life. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* makes clear that an effective ministry with young people incorporates them into the life of the community, where they can share their gifts and talents with the whole community. If young people are to have positive experiences of church life, they must have opportunities to be involved in the whole life of the community. Such opportunities for this type of interaction are at the heart of youth ministry, not on the periphery. By being involved in church life with adults, young people gain a view of what it means to be an adult Catholic Christian. This is a special gift of adults to young people.

The categories of youth ministry as outlined in *A Vision of Youth Ministry* closely parallel the fundamental ministries of the church: word, worship and celebrating, creating community, and service and healing.<sup>2</sup> The seven categories of youth ministry describe the forms that this ministry should take. It is a common framework for a holistic ministry with young people. Briefly, the seven components of youth ministry are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

**Word:** proclaiming the Good News that leads young people to faith in Jesus (evangelization) and deepening young people's faith in Jesus and applying that faith to their everyday life (catechesis)

**Worship:** celebrating relationships in community and with the Lord through a variety of worship experiences, personal prayer, and spiritual development

**Creating community:** building relationships with young people and creating a healthy environment for growth, in which young people can experience acceptance, belonging, and participation

**Guidance and healing:** responding to young people's need for spiritual, moral, and personal counseling; vocational guidance; and reconciliation with self, others (peers and family), and God

**Justice and service:** educating young people to the demands of justice and the social problems of our world, responding to young people who suffer injustice, and motivating young people for service on behalf of others

**Enablement:** calling forth adults and young people to become ministers and providing them with the understanding and skills needed for effective ministry

**Advocacy:** working on behalf of young people, interpreting their concerns and needs, and standing up for them in the Christian, and larger, community

Youth ministry has experienced a renewal within the U.S. Catholic church. A renewed ministry with young people brings a need for new and better resources to assist leaders. Before turning to the resources found in this book, let's examine the place of creative social and learning strategies within youth ministry.

## **Creative Strategies for Youth Ministry**

We have already seen the primacy of relationships in youth ministry. However, as relationships grow and programs are created, strategies are needed to accomplish youth ministry's tasks. The strategies in this book are aids. Their aim is to provide you with a variety of activities you can use in any number of programs. Some of these strategies are primarily suited for one or another component of youth ministry. However, most are adaptable to any number of components. All these strategies foster a particular type of learning—experiential learning. To understand its contribution to your youth ministry, let's examine experiential learning.

### **Experiential Learning**

We have often heard it said that we learn from experience. This is true to an extent. But so much of our own life experience goes by without our ever learning from it. If young people's life experiences are to be sources of learning and growth, then young people must reflect upon and assimilate them. This often goes undone because no one takes time to help them reflect upon and learn from those experiences. In addition to life experience, there is a second source of experiential learning: structured experience. Experiences we develop that engage young people in the learning process and enable them to reflect are a rich resource for learning.

The structured experiences found in the Creative Resources series—communication games, learning strategies, simulations, projects, case studies, planning ideas, crowd-breakers, mixers, games, special events, and skits—are potential learning experiences for young people.

## Case Study Method

Catholic social thought and Catholic moral theology aim to sustain and support the fullness of human life. Catholic social thought does not view the human community as a necessary evil that compels individuals to put up with people they would rather not be with. Rather, Catholic social thought sees human beings as *essentially* related, as people who are at their best when they are in community, when they are *with and for* one another. Throughout two thousand years of life and reflection, the church has developed a uniquely Catholic perspective, one that sometimes agrees with and sometimes finds itself at odds with the prevailing value system.

Individual Catholics are able to draw on this body of Catholic thought and this embodied Catholic way of being. Catholics can draw support from the faith of the church, whose moral guidelines are based on the Commandments, the Beatitudes, and those gospel values held and lived and reflected on throughout its long tradition. Individual Catholics are also able to draw on papal documents and bishops' pastorals that, in times of great risk and uncertainty, call our attention to the issues of life itself, of war and peace, and of economic justice, to name a few.

It is your task and privilege as a youth leader to help young people arrive at solutions that express and integrate Catholic values. These solutions may require you to present values that the young people, as a matter of fact, do not hold or are having a difficult time understanding or accepting. These values need not be "laid on" young people, but they must be presented as part of their Catholic heritage. Guided by the Scriptures, the church's Tradition, and the prevailing sense of the faithful, individuals are better able to make their own decision following their informed conscience in a given set of particular circumstances.

Case studies provide you and the young people an occasion to reason, reflect, and pray together. From the starting point of a hypothetical but real-life situation, the case method challenges participants to discuss the various options and to develop and hone skills in decision-making. The case study becomes a springboard for discussion and for the involvement of participants by raising questions to which they may develop alternative answers rather than receiving clear-cut solutions, which are in any case usually difficult to arrive at. (Those situations that do in fact have clear-cut solutions make for brief dis-

cussions and short sessions.) The situations here are designedly thorny and do not admit of easy answers, but they do ask of the young people careful and prayerful thought, engagement, and an acknowledgment and assessment of their own values. The case studies allow those involved to develop analytic skills and to apply principles that support their decisions. The following general considerations will help you effectively use the case-study method:

1. Offer the participants a chance to ask questions about the purpose and the process involved in the case study.
2. Encourage careful listening among the participants.

3. Explore the difference between subjective and objective opinions.
4. Encourage the participants to respect one another's opinions.
5. Keep the group on task; avoid tangents that tend to confuse the issue.
6. Stress that all information given is important and worthy of consideration.
7. If necessary, offer time for the participants to study resource material that can help them reach a solution.
8. If necessary, build in follow-up time.
9. Be creative; feel free to modify the process to accommodate your needs and situation.

## Notes

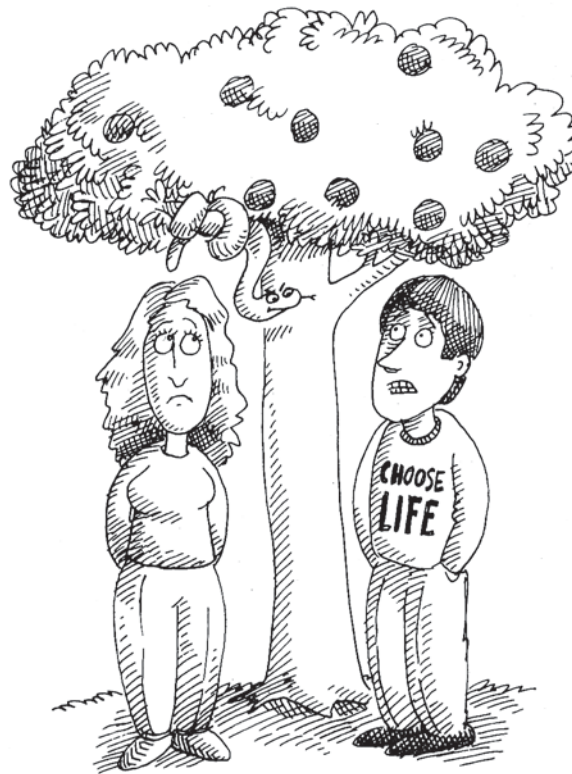
1. United States Catholic Conference (USCC), *A Vision of Youth Ministry* (Washington, DC: USCC, Department of Education, 1976), p. 4.
2. For a contemporary description of the fundamental ministries of the church, see James Dunning, "About Ministry: Sharing Our Gifts," *PACE* 8 (1977) and *PACE* 9 (1978).
3. USCC, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, p. 7.





## PART 1

# Making a Choice



## Introduction

Most of the case studies in this section ask the young people to discuss what they *would* do and then what they *should* do. The first part of the discussion requires honesty, and the second, clarity. Young people are willing to be honest when they find themselves in a welcoming, accepting setting. They need to feel free to speak the views they deeply hold about each situation. They need to be able to expect that their views will be received and respected.

The second step requires the pooling, presentation, and defense of the values behind each decision put forward by the young people. At this point, you as youth minister are in a position to present, if necessary, the broader moral considerations grounded in the Gospel and mediated, held, and shared by the church.

## Caught in the Middle 1

Carla is a teacher's aide for English class. The teacher has entrusted her with the job of taking attendance each day as soon as class begins. Before class, a guy that Carla has been wanting to date asks her to mark him present even though he is going to cut the class. He quickly walks away before Carla can give an answer.

- What would you do in Carla's situation? Why?
- What should you do in Carla's situation? Why?

## Caught in the Middle 2

Some of your friends invite you to go with them to the movies tonight. It sounds like you will have a good time if you go. When you arrive at the movies, you realize that your friends have decided to sneak into the theater through a side door. You have to think quickly. Should you sneak in with your friends, pay for your ticket and sit with your friends even though they did not pay, or walk home?

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

## Caught in the Middle 3

Your English class has gone to the library to work on a research assignment. Several of your friends are goofing around while you are trying to work. One of your friends pulls the fire alarm. The librarian blames you, and you are suspended from school for a day. You don't want to squeal on your friend, but you don't really want to be suspended either.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

## Taking a Position 1

Mary found out yesterday that she is pregnant. She knows her parents will never forgive her. Recently, a neighbor's daughter became pregnant, and when Mary's father heard about it, he said that the girl should be kicked out of the house. Mary is afraid her dad will do something like that if he finds out about her pregnancy. In desperation, Mary turns to you. She has made up her mind to get an abortion, but she wants your opinion first. She is not sure if abortion is right or wrong, but it seems to be the only logical solution to her situation.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

## Taking a Position 2

You just found out that a student in one of your classes is a homosexual. On the way home from school, he sits next to you on the bus and asks you what you think about homosexuality.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

## Taking a Position 3

You keep hearing these opinions about sex from students in your health class at school: Sex is something to be enjoyed. Everyone is doing it. Sex is a personal choice. If you love the person, then sex is all right. After class, the student sitting next to you asks for your opinion. The student knows that you are a Catholic.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

## It Is Your Job 1

It is Friday afternoon. You have to be at work in one hour. You have just gotten off the phone with a friend who invited you to a party tonight. You have been grounded for the last two weeks. This is your first free night, but you have to work. You decide to call in sick and go to the party. The next day at work, your boss asks you how you are feeling.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

## It Is Your Job 2

You work at an ice-cream parlor. This is your first real job; you work after school three days per week. You have noticed that the other employees, who are all about your age, give free ice cream to their friends. When three of your friends visit the store one afternoon and ask for a free scoop of ice cream, you decide that it is all right to give them one.

One day, the boss leaves you in charge of the store. You see one of the other employees giving away ice cream to a friend. When you tell him not to give free ice cream, he says, "You do it, why can't I?"

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

## It Is Your Job 3

You have been working part-time at a record store for six months, and you are still not making minimum wage. You have tried to get another

job, but you have had no luck. You took this job to make some extra spending money, but after you pay for gas and insurance on your car, you have very little left.

One day, the boss asks you to mark down the prices on some of the older tapes for an upcoming sale. A friend of yours, who also works at the store, says you should mark down some of the new tapes. That way the two of you could afford to buy the new ones. He reasons that your boss is not even paying you minimum wage, so you deserve the opportunity to buy at a discount.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

### **Honest, I Didn't Do It**

Three weeks ago you wrecked your parents' car. This is the first time since the accident that your parents have allowed you to use the car. As you are parking in the school parking lot, you hit a pole. Your parents told you before you left for the football game that if you had another accident, they would take away your license. You consider telling them that somebody hit you in the parking lot. You know that they would believe the story and that you would keep your driver's license.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

### **Honest, Mom, I Didn't Do It**

Your parents are gone for the weekend. They left you at home to watch the house. You are the only one there. Before they left, your parents told you that you can go out with your friends but you are not to have anyone over to the house while they are gone. A friend of yours talks you into throwing a small party. You decide that your parents will never find out. During the party, someone breaks your mother's favorite vase. You try to glue it back together, but you cannot. When your parents return, you tell them the dog broke the vase.

Later in the week, a neighbor mentions to your mother that she thought you had a few friends at the house over the weekend. Your mother asks you if anyone was at the house while she and your father were gone.

- What would you do? Why?
- What should you do? Why?

### **Honest, Dad, I Didn't Do It**

It is Friday night. Sharon's boyfriend has invited her to his house for pizza and television. When she arrives, Sharon finds that her boyfriend's parents are not home and will not be home until late in the