

Note: All of the following material is taken verbatim from a booklet titled
“ROAD MAP TO MATURE YOUTH”
by Rev. Frank Hamrick¹

THE ONLY RIGHT FOUNDATION FOR YOUTH MINISTRY:

“There is only one textbook for the child of God—the verbal, plenary inspired Word of God. While other books (such as this one) offer insight and help, the final authority must rest with God’s Word. Simple as this proposition may be, Christian workers often violate their own belief in the Word by turning to everything but the Word when seeking to learn how to minister or serve the Lord... Surprisingly, many have never thought to turn to God’s Word for information on youth work. We go to conferences to hear what the experts say (I go too, and conferences do have their value), we read books by outstanding youth leaders, we share ideas with each other, and occasionally we even have a good idea ourselves. Gradually, we develop a method that we will use the rest of our lives in the ministry. But sadly, most of these ideas and methods are not based on the Bible, but on experience. We do things because ‘*so-and-so tried it and it worked.*’ **Pragmatism!** Fundamentalists (and let’s not be ashamed of using that word) are by tradition, **traditionalists.** That is, we do things the way we do them because 1) that’s the way it’s always been done; or 2) that’s the way so-and-so does it; or 3) the church I was brought up in did it that way... **Neither pragmatism or tradition is sufficient grounds for doing what we do for the Lord.** John 12:48 tells us, ‘*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*’ Every action, every method that I use in the youth ministry is to be judged on the basis of its adherence to the principles of that ministry as laid down in the Word of God. I will one day stand accountable before God for my methods, purposes and activities in the youth ministry. The authority by which my ministry will be judged will be the inspired Word... The best advice any youth pastor could be given would be to go to God’s Word and search out those purposes and methods by which a youth ministry should be conducted. Don’t ever do things just because someone else tried it and it worked... What does it accomplish over the long haul? Only when methods and activities and purposes are based on unchanging Biblical principles, will the results be eternal and blessed by God” (pp. 7-8)

“THE BIBLICAL DIRECTION (FOR) YOUTH MINISTRY:

“What are we supposed to be accomplishing in the youth ministry? Where are we supposed to be heading? Perhaps nothing is more fundamental to the success of a youth ministry than the question of purpose or direction. **A man will not set out on a trip unless he knows 1) where he is headed, 2) the route he must travel to arrive at the desired destination, and 3) the mode of travel.** Obviously, youth workers often find themselves immersed in their ministry several years before they come to grips with these details. Yet they should have their destination, route and method of travel clearly defined before they begin...the Word alone must give us our destination, route and mode of travel...

“Ephesians 4 reveals our direction or destination. Paul is in the middle of a discussion of the unity that must exist between true believers. Part of that unity is brought about by the possession of certain gifts, and by the administration of certain gifted offices in the church. These gifted officers are mentioned in verse 11: *apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers.* Obviously, the apostles and prophets no longer exist. They were special men of the first century to whom the Lord gave special knowledge and through

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POSACT i.e. *POSITIVE ACTION FOR CHRIST*, is a youth ministry also known as “*ProTeens*” (833 Falls Road, Rocky Mount, NC 27802-1948), material copyright 1982, www.positiveaction.org. While I do not necessarily endorse every single statement made here by Mr. Hamrick, I believe there is a great deal of wisdom and biblical help to be found in his comments—Rev. Mike Edwards. These excerpts are taken verbatim from the booklet “*Roadmap to Mature Youth*” by Rev. Frank Hamrick. The booklet is currently out of print. Originally compiled February, 2009, revised Feb./2011 & Oct./2012 for a course on youth ministry which I taught in 2009, 2011 & 2012 in St. Vincent, West Indies. (rev. 1/2015, Madison, Ohio) Material appearing in parentheses () appears that way in the original, while material contained in brackets [], as well as all underlining & bolding has been added by me-mwe.

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whom he revealed the doctrines of the church on which our ministries are based today... That leaves the evangelists and the pastors and teachers. A careful reading of verse 11 will also show us that pastor and teacher is the same office... They are one and the same. Thus, the pastor is to be a teacher—not an evangelist. That doesn't mean he isn't concerned about the lost, but it does mean his primary emphasis must be the teaching of the saints. Sad to say, there are too many evangelists pastoring churches. They never teach their people anything other than the milk of the Word. One of the crying needs of our day is Godly pastors who are concerned with the building up of the saints to do the work of the ministry. **The youth worker is also a pastor. He is to be concerned about the spiritual growth and maturity of young people.** Certainly he is interested in the salvation of his youth, but his interest extends far beyond their salvation. This is only the starting point. His real concern is the development and growth of his youth...

“Verse 12 reveals the true purpose of the pastor/teacher: ‘for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.’ To adequately understand the purpose of a pastor/teacher (and therefore a youth pastor's purpose), we must consider several words in verse 12. The word *for* occurs three times in the verse. Yet, two different Greek words are translated for in this verse: ‘For (*pros*) the perfecting of the saints, for (*eis*) the work of the ministry, for (*eis*) the edifying of the body of Christ.’ *Pros* occurs once and means ‘with a view toward’ whereas *eis* indicates ‘unto’ or ‘into’. Thus, the pastor/teacher is to perfect the saints into (to do) the work of the ministry. It is not the pastor who does the work of the ministry—rather, it is the perfected saints who do this work. Therefore, our direction or destination is clearly marked out. As youth pastors we are to mature (perfect) the youth to do the work of the ministry. ‘*The work of the ministry*’ includes such things as witnessing, studying the Word, living a separated Christian life and so on. However, it goes far beyond Christian living. The ‘*work of the ministry*’ includes the work of ministering or pasturing. It encompasses the entire gamut of full-time Christian work opportunities. Thus, pastor/teachers are preparing youth to go into Christian ministry and start other Bible-believing churches around the world... **Thus we see our Biblical destination for youth ministry—maturing teens for the work of ministering.**” (pp. 8-10)

A BIBLICAL ROUTE/PATHWAY TO FOLLOW IN YOUTH MINISTRY:

“Having established our destination, we must ascertain the route to be taken to arrive at our goal (above). It's one thing to know what we are to do, but it's another thing to know how we are to do it. In **2 Peter 1:5-7** Peter lays down a very definite order or arrangement of steps for growth in the Christian life... **We (would) suggest that even as Paul has given us our *destination* (mature the saints for the work of the ministry), Peter gives us the *route* to be taken to accomplish that task.** Here we see 1) five major *ingredients* necessary in an effective youth program, 2) five *steps* in the development of a Christian teen, and 3) the *chronological order* of these steps...

“Thus, 2 Peter 1:5-7 may be applied to youth work three different ways:

- 1) it diagrams ***the progressive steps*** all individual teens must take, beginning with salvation and culminating with maturity;
 - 2) it names ***the five basic ingredients*** an effective youth program must ultimately include;
 - 3) it teaches ***the chronological development*** of a youth ministry in a local church (starting from scratch to a full blown youth ministry)
- ...Obviously, all five steps are not possible in the first months (or even first year) of a new ministry. These steps must be added as the youth group is spiritually ready.” (pp. 11-12)

“THE FIVE STEPS AS OUTLINED BY PETER ARE FAITH, VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE, CHARACTER AND SERVICE...”

“THE FIRST STEP in anyone’s life must be *SALVATION* (i.e. *FAITH*). Here then is the first duty of a youth pastor—he must bring his youth group to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, evangelism is an essential *first* ingredient in an effective youth ministry. Virtue is added to faith. It is a mistake to reverse these two qualities. True virtue can only be added when faith has been established. Some youth pastors waste much time and effort trying to teach virtue to a group of teens who have not yet been born again. Only after a youth pastor is certain that the vast majority of his youth are assured of their salvation should he attempt to lead them to establish virtue in their lives.” (p. 12)

THE SECOND STEP: *VIRTUE*. “*What is virtue?* According to Greek scholars, virtue comes from a Greek word that has numerous shades of meaning: manliness, majesty, splendor, moral excellence, class, worth and any praiseworthy quality. However, the most frequent and common meaning of the word is *moral excellence*. Note that immediately upon faith, the new Christian is to develop moral excellence, purity, spiritual majesty and splendor—and this *before* knowledge is added. Sad to say, this is the most neglected ingredient in a youth ministry. Few churches have an ongoing program to develop *virtue* in their teens...

“Once faith and virtue have been achieved in a youth group—and only after they have been achieved—a youth pastor (worker) turns his attention to Bible study. **Knowledge follows virtue.** Sad to say, many youth pastors (& youth workers) begin their work with a group by initiating a Bible study or Bible club program. Peter tells us, however, not to add knowledge until faith and virtue are firmly established. This points up one of the problems our Christian Day Schools (& colleges-*mwe*) are facing. By necessity the Christian Day School is taking teens who know nothing of faith and virtue, and teaching them the doctrines of the Word. Thus in many cases a generation of youth are being educated in the doctrines, terminology, and do’s and don’t of the Christian life while still unsaved ... Upon salvation, virtue is to be established and upon virtue is finally added doctrinal teaching. When we cast the pearls to the unsaved they will trample them under foot as is evidenced by Christian School teens who become scoffers and bitter as they persist in our Christian Schools in an unsaved condition. Eventually they become either apathetic or sullen or rebellious to the teaching of the Word. This is common in most Christian Schools. Sooner or later they turn and rend you. That is, they finally turn against the ones who are teaching the truth, many times attacking them verbally, making fun of them and causing multiplied problems in the school. These are but some of the consequences of adding knowledge before faith and virtue. **Someone has said that knowledge without virtue leads to arrogance.** Paul adds, ‘*knowledge puffeth up*’ (1 Cor. 8:1). That is, knowledge without the proper foundation (faith and virtue) will lead to pride and pharisaism. Teens who do not have virtue will not be able to handle Bible knowledge.” (pp. 12-14)

THE THIRD STEP: *KNOWLEDGE*. “However, Bible knowledge *is* an essential part of a teen’s growth. We must not omit it. Virtue without knowledge leads to instability. We must never try to instill knowledge before virtue, but neither should we fail to add knowledge to virtue. Therefore, we must work toward the time when a strong Bible study program can be added to our youth program. There are two steps, according to the Word, to be taken in teaching virtuous teens the Word. **First, we must teach them the milk of the Word, then we must teach them the meat of the Word.** If we start with the meat first, we may strangle our youth and thus hamper their growth for the Lord.” (p. 14)

THE FOURTH STEP: *CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT*. “Peter uses three additions to knowledge to indicate this fourth step—temperance (self-control), patience and Godliness. These three character qualities, however, are not evidenced until the foundation of faith, virtue and knowledge has been laid... Many youth pastors have tried to use a character-building... program with teens who were still at step 1 or 2.” (pp. 14-15)

THE FIFTH & FINAL STEP: *TEACHING THE SKILLS OF LOVING SERVICE*. “After character is evidence in the youth group, and strong Godly teens are being produced, the youth worker is ready to take

step five with his teens—**teaching the skills of loving service** (brotherly kindness and love). The teens are now ready to learn how to preach, how to work with children, how to lead singing and so on. Thus, through these five steps we bring our teens from the point of salvation to the goal of service... Obviously, you will always have teens in your group who are at varying levels of development. Thus, once you take your first group (the trailblazers) to step five, all five steps will be in operation at once. But don't worry. This doesn't mean you will have to have five meetings a week in order to include all five steps. The entire five step program (once you have been in a church long enough to develop all five steps) can be adequately covered in two meetings a week...

“Interestingly enough, David used this same order in Psalm 1:1-3. In verse 1 the [believer] is to be separated from sin (virtue), then in verse 2 he is to study the Word (knowledge), then he becomes steadfast (character) and finally in verse 3 he serves successfully (service).” (pp. 14-15)