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THE LONGEVITY OF YOUTH MINISTERS IN RELATIONSHIP
TO PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND
LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Russell Neal Wheelington

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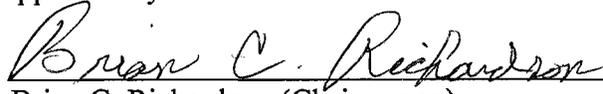
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Russell Neal Wheelington

Read and Approved by:



Brian C. Richardson (Chairperson)



Mark E. Simpson

Date 13 May 2005

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To my God and Father, His Son and my Savior, Jesus Christ,
and the Holy Spirit, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank and acknowledge Dr. Brian C. Richardson for his passion and leadership in youth ministry. His commitment to training and educating youth ministers will ensure youth ministry will continue to thrive and grow the Kingdom for generations to come.

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I would be remiss to not thank the youth ministers who participated in this study and truly made it possible by raising the standard in youth ministry. We still have much to learn from them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Because of the impact and influence a youth minister has with students, longevity in youth ministry is something to be addressed. If a youth minister leaves his position for another place of ministry it can have negative short and long-term consequences, a position that is vacated after eighteen months or less is even more damaging. This damage is compounded if the next youth minister is also short term. Students and adults alike may develop a certain mistrust towards their new youth minister because they may be thinking he, too, will soon be leaving. "With so many foundational habits and values being formed in the adolescent years, whether they be positive or negative, the youth minister is more needed than ever before. From a Christian education perspective, this "window" of adolescence is approximately six to ten years in duration, from the time they enter middle school until at least the time they graduate from high school" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 226). If churches and youth programs experience a pattern of leaving in their leadership it can create somewhat of a vacuum of mistrust between students and ministers. There are those youth ministers who stay in one place of service for an extended amount of time. These youth ministers have much to teach present and future youth ministers concerning ministry and leadership.

Research Concern

Some literature shows the average stay for an individual in youth ministry is eighteen months (Dean 2002). Others would argue that this is statistically on the high side. Merton Strommen, author, founder, and former president of Search Institute, states, “This oft observed fact has led to a much quoted but unsubstantiated statistic: the tenure of the average youth minister on a particular job is a year and a half or less. I know of no study that establishes that statistic. Someone must have made an estimate based on personal observation – and being a person of some authority, has been quoted ad infinitum” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 34). While the tenures may change from year to year, the fact remains that youth ministers have a notorious reputation for leaving after short amounts of time spent at one church. Whether these departures are the result of a church’s pastor, committee, or from the minister’s personal desire to pursue a different church, a revolving door at a youth minister’s position leaves students and parents feeling neglected and desperate for consistency. “The bottom line is that the church must upgrade its efforts or be forever irrelevant with its perceived lackluster effort for God. Barna also states that close to 85 percent of decisions made for Christ will be made before a person’s eighteenth birthday” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 226).

Short-term departures are merely symptoms of greater problems that exist within churches, institutions of higher education, and in the personal life of the minister. “Quick departures have a lot to do with inadequate preparation and unrealistic expectations” (Fields 2002). When youth ministers know how to interpret their call to ministry they are better able to approach ministry from the standpoint of getting in it to stay. Youth ministers that set a realistic and proper pace in ministry it assures long-term

results and the ability to finish strong (Fields 2002). No one benefits from youth ministers who prematurely exit positions and leave a spiritual and leadership void in the lives of students and the church. Students are stripped of a leader and friend who can relate to their needs and parents are also left without a partner in ministering to their children. There have been those student ministers who simply leave when times get tough. “Longevity in our field is uncommon. This is both unfortunate for the individuals who leave and tragic for the health of the church. The longer you work in youth ministry, the easier it becomes, and the better you minister to students” (Fields 2002).

Society created this need and desperation for youth ministry without even knowing it; yet now the challenges are before us. “What we now call the ‘youth culture’ grew out of the vacuum created by adults who wanted to be young and a society that had lost its respect for tradition” (Patterson 45, 1984). Teens are searching for something in their life that makes sense and gives them hope. There is a staggering amount of influences and religions in the world that are competing for the attention and dedication of youth, someone who will embrace a set of beliefs and carry their message on to the generations that follow. Inevitably, many of these teens will find themselves in our churches searching for answers and comparing Christianity to the many other possibilities they see as potential solutions for life’s questions. “For the first time since 1986, church attendance among teenagers is on the rise and they are there because they want to be there” (Dean 2001, 19). The church needs to be continually prepared for these young people when they visit. Many churches underestimate teens in thinking students are simply looking for another social group to belong to or to have another hang out away from home, however, youth are desiring something much more. Phil Briggs,

Distinguished Professor of Collegiate Ministry and Youth Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological seminary, says “Youth want something to believe in – something to give themselves to – something that answers the big question – something to live by” (Briggs 2000). Knowing this, churches and educational institutions should be fervently raising up ministers who are prepared to confront the challenging issues of culture and do that while being a constant in students’ lives, and not be compared to a “migrant worker.”

This generation of young people make up a large part of our society worldwide. “Approximately one person in five is between fifteen and twenty-four, or 18% of the world’s population” (Dean 2001, 18). This alarming figure should compel churches and institutions of education to address this percentage with appropriate purpose and leadership. Instead, inconsistency in leadership gives the fifteen to twenty-four year olds the opportunity to drive today’s culture in regard to morality and influence. Ethicist Paul Ramsey has observed that “ours is the only era in the entire history of human life on this planet in which the ‘elders’ of the tribe ask its newer members what the tribal rules and standards of expected behavior would be” (Patterson 1984, 45). The leadership that once existed in relationships with young people have gone by the wayside. Teens then are left to fend for themselves in a world where truth is relative and one can determine their own set of beliefs without the help or guidance of adults. Once this freedom is handed over, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get back. “Teenagers are driving our culture and they won’t be giving the keys back anytime soon” (Dean 2001, 18). Even with the insurmountable challenge in impacting students and young adults, with the love of God through Christ, there is always hope. Just as students are set in their minds as to how to conduct themselves, there also needs to be a group of youth ministers who are even more

resolved to influence and lead these students towards a bright future. Stepping back and looking at the big picture, “Could there be a better time to enter ministry, especially ministry with young people?” (Dean 2001, 19).

Research Purpose

This research investigated the factors leading to the longevity of youth ministers with extended tenure positions in relationship to organizational climate factors, leadership techniques, ministerial calling, and spiritual giftedness.

Delimitations of the Study

This research was delimited in several ways. First, the study was delimited to youth ministers who have been in youth ministry for ten years or more. While the phenomenon of youth ministers who stay in their positions for months or a couple of years is widespread, this research focused on those who have been in youth ministry for an extended amount of time. Though some called to ministry may see youth ministry as a stepping stone to the pastorate or another area of ministry, those who will be involved in this study have already made long careers out of youth ministry.

Second, the study was delimited to youth ministers who have been at their current church for a minimum of ten years. This gave the researcher the opportunity to see what type of impact remaining at one church can have on the minister and inevitably their youth. And if, in fact, the church itself played a part in retaining the minister. While it is not unheard of for those in youth ministry to make careers of it, to have remained at their current church for ten years makes these ministers all the more uncommon.

Third, the study was delimited to youth ministers who have been a primary minister that sees to the spiritual growth of youth. This staff minister will have been responsible for knowing and understanding youth culture, as well as being able to relate and have compassion for students.

Fourth, the study was delimited to youth ministers who are responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive program for youth as a part of the larger purpose and mission of the church. This would include planning activities and events that attend to the spiritual needs of youth.

Research Questions

1. What are the common demographic characteristics of youth ministers who have extended tenures?
2. What organizational climate factors do youth ministers report as contributing to their longevity in youth ministry?
3. What are the common leadership techniques of youth ministers who have extended tenures?
4. What is the perception of the call to ministry in youth ministers who have extended tenures?
5. What are the common spiritual gifts of youth ministers who have extended tenures?
6. What is the nature of the relationship between a youth minister's longevity, demographic characteristics, spiritual gifts, climate factors, and leadership technique?

Terminology

Several terms warranted definitions as they pertain to this work in order to better understand the research and its findings.

Expert. An individual who has special skill, knowledge, and understanding derived from their experience and training. This knowledge will be beyond what the typical person who may hold the same position and title may have.

Expertise. Expert opinion or commentary based on an individual's experience and knowledge.

Leadership techniques. The technique the youth minister utilizes to mobilize and "get things done through other people" (Stanley 2003, 23). This would include but not be limited to receiving and casting vision, influence, communication, relationships, and delegation. The premise to effective leadership is the assumed goal or goals that are being pursued.

Longevity. While relative by nature, this term will be used in this study to distinguish the length of time a youth minister has remained in their current position and church. This term will reflect the number of years a youth minister has remained at a position and church. For this study the term will be indicative of ten years or longer.

Organizational climate. "A relatively enduring quality of the internal environment of an organization that (a) is experienced by its members, (b) influences their behavior, and (c) can be described in terms of the values or a particular set of characteristics (or attributes) of the organization" (Tagiuri 1968, 27).

Organizational climate factor. "One of the basic elements, dimensions, or characteristics of the organizational climate in a given local church" (Pettegrew 1993, 5).

Short tenure. For this study, short tenure will refer to youth ministers who were in positions for thirty six months, three years, or less.

Spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift “has been described as a special qualification granted by the Spirit to every believer to empower him to serve within the framework of the body of Christ. A gift is a divinely ordained spiritual ability through which Christ enables His church to execute its task on earth” (Flynn 1974, 25-26). This research will further narrow this definition as it applies to leadership and longevity in youth ministry.

Youth minister. For this research the term youth minister will represent a minister whose responsibility is to minister to the needs of students in middle school and high school. This area of ministry picks up where the children’s ministry of the church leaves off and before the area of college and young adult ministry begins. Another term associated with and used synonymously with youth minister will be minister to youth.

Procedural Overview

The researcher contacted youth ministers who fit the delimitations of the study and sent each a survey created by the researcher. Upon their completion of the survey, the researcher compiled the responses. The compiled responses were then sent to three of the youth ministers from the sample to better obtain their insight into the phenomenon of longevity in youth ministry. From this, the results and the youth minister’s comments were compiled into one final study.

Research Assumptions

Several foundational assumptions were made at the outset of this study. The first assumption of this study is that youth ministers were able to fill out a given survey. This would include being able to effectively convey responses to demographic survey

questions. It is also assumed the youth minister will take the amount of time needed to complete the survey.

The second assumption of this study was that youth ministers could articulate their call to ministry, specifically youth ministry. This should include how the youth minister knew he or she was called to youth ministry and what keeps them in youth ministry. An understanding of what it means to be called by God based on their expertise and knowledge would also be assumed. Misconceptions regarding the call to ministry was also addressed by the sample of youth ministers in relation to their expertise and experience.

The third assumption of this study was that the youth ministers surveyed know and understand their spiritual gifts. The youth minister was expected to understand how their spiritual gift fits into their area of ministry and leadership technique. The spiritual gifts used in leadership and longevity are identified and defined, however, application of the spiritual gifts listed in the survey question is implied.

The fourth assumption of this study was that the youth ministers surveyed know and understand the reason for their longevity. These youth ministers should be able to convey the factors leading to their extended tenure. This would include the ability to look beyond invitations to move to another church and/or position.

Finally, the fifth assumption of this study was that the youth ministers surveyed were able to identify their leadership techniques. This would include how they build and train their ministry team. It would also include how the youth minister develops student leaders.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

When a youth minister is in a position for a brief amount of time, he does not get to see the impact he would have on students nor does he see any long-term goals come to fruition. Harm is also done to the students' ability to trust, which is damaged with the view that their leader will only be temporary.

Youth ministry is not simply a stepping stone to other positions in ministry. By observation, many who enter youth ministry with the intention of remaining there, however God sometimes calls them to other areas or positions of ministry. There are those, nonetheless, who accept a youth ministry position knowing full well that it is merely a stepping stone to what they feel they is their ultimate goal in ministry. When this is known, students will be very hesitant and even skeptical about investing and trusting their lives to those ministers who are there temporarily and looking to move on.

A youth minister who is an effective leader will be affirmed in the call to ministry with youth. This call is confirmed by students as they continue to grow in their faith and by students who make decisions for Christ. Adult volunteers also play a major role in the affirmation of the youth minister. A team of youth workers who are as passionate about ministry with youth as the minister greatly affirms the youth minister's call with their loyalty, trust, and shared vision. The call to ministry will also be affirmed

by seeing goals attempted and eventually achieved by the team under the leadership of the youth minister.

The issue of short-term youth ministers, regardless of how rampant it is or is not, is fixable. Fleeting youth ministers is an issue that is not beyond repair. Perhaps if those going into youth ministry better understand their call, there would be less turn over in that position. This could be accomplished by professors, teachers, and mentors who specifically guide students through the process and understanding of the call to ministry itself.

A youth minister who better understands his call to youth ministry will be more likely to remain in that position. This study will assist in evaluating the characteristics and expectations of future youth pastors who pursue the call to youth ministry. When a minister accepts and embraces his call to youth ministry he will be less likely to leave his position of ministry when difficulties come. The minister acknowledges a higher calling as he pushes through issues that typically surround any area of ministry. When it is time for a youth minister to leave, it will be because he understands God is calling him to another place of ministry and no other reason.

There are vast amounts of literature and information on job satisfaction, leadership, call to ministry, youth ministry, and thriving in youth ministry. While much has been written on burnout in youth ministry, comparatively less has focused on those in youth ministry with extended tenures. Still, even less has been written on leadership from the youth minister's perspective. This section will address and present theoretical foundations based on these subjects, as well as the youth minister and spiritual gifts,

leadership techniques of youth ministers, the call to ministry, youth ministry, and thriving in youth ministry.

Ethics, Morals, and Values

The Christian should seek to be beyond reproach in the areas of ethics, morals and values. Believers should also understand that their calling is to a higher standard than the one in which the world proposes. God asks those who love him to be like him, therefore, the believer is to take on the attitude and mind of Christ in all things. "The absolute basis of Christian ethics is God. There is no standard or law beyond God" (Knight 1998, 175). This also exhorts the believer to be a hard worker and good steward of all the things which God has given him responsibility (1 Corinthians 15:10). Christians are to be productive members of society and to be proponents of fairness and equality in the areas of unity. The Christian should seek ways in which to serve others. Believers should also seek to be peacemakers in all situations, this, however, does not prescribe the believer to become a victim to the world. Likewise, Christians should make it their goal and purpose to protect and care for those who are unable to care for themselves or are being victims at the hand of one who is more powerful (Luke 10:25-37). Believers are also commanded to love one another, even as Christ loves them (John 13:34). "Christian help to another individual should rather be seen as an outflowing of interest in and care for others because of a personal acceptance of God's love" (Knight 1998, 177). This is the unity which binds all things together. Christians are to treat their bodies as the temple of God in which he resides as the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2). The believer's life should project the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-25). These should be evident through the actions and attitudes of those who follow Christ. The actions and attitudes of the Christian should flow from the very heart of God and not seek anything in return or favor from man (Hebrews 8:10). If any believer boasts he should boast only in the Lord and what the Lord has done as this acknowledges to the believer that it is God through whom we can do all things (Philippians 3:7-10, 4:13).

The Minister and Spiritual Gifts

“Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant” (1Corinthians 12:1). This charge and encouragement by Paul to the Corinthian church still applies to the church today. Many believers are either mistaken in regards to spiritual gifts or are without knowledge and understanding about giftedness in the Holy Spirit. Scripture lists nineteen gifts of the Holy Spirit: apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, shepherding, teaching, exhortation, knowledge, wisdom, ministering, hospitality, giving, government, showing mercy, faith, discernment, miracles, healing, tongues, interpretation (Romans 12:3-8, 1Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30, Ephesians 4:11). While this list is not exhaustive as to how the Holy Spirit may gift a believer, it is, nonetheless, a comprehensive look at how believers are gifted.

The church, or body of believers, is to be about the task of building up one another in the faith and in serving the cause of the church. “Through His truth comes spiritual fortifying of the individual and hence of the corporate church” (Thomas 1999, 88). By design, giftedness by the Holy Spirit is not meant to end in the believer, but to be a part of a greater organism and its purpose of glorifying God. “Gifts are for the common

good, not individual glory” (Flynn 1974, 20). Believers are not to use the spiritual gifts to draw attention to themselves, rather to draw attention away from themselves and to Christ, the object of the believer’s attention and affection. “This glorification of Christ is the hallmark of all true ministry of the Spirit in our midst” (Baxter 1983, 76). These spiritual gifts are designed for those who have placed their trust in Christ. It should be no surprise then that the world does not comprehend the nature of the gift or the Giver. “Because these gifts are spiritual in nature, they are not going to be readily understood by those who do not have a personal relationship with Christ” (Stanley 1999, 1).

Every Believer Is Gifted

Since these gifts have to do with spiritual edification, they are given when a person comes to a point of belief in Jesus Christ. Believers do not have to wait for a period of time before they are gifted by the Holy Spirit. “A believer, therefore, receives his spiritual gifts at the moment of conversion. These gifts may not show up immediately, but they are as latently within us as are natural gifts at our physical birth” (Baxter 1983, 52). Believers are not limited to one specific gift but may possibly have two or more gifts which are to be used to encourage the church. “Every child has a gift or gifts. At the moment of a believer’s baptism into the body of Christ at regeneration, he is given a gift which should be exercised for the health of the whole body” (Flynn 1974, 17).

These gifts from the Spirit link believers together and creates dependence and accountability in one another. While the speaking gifts may be more visible and draw attention to the believer, the ministering gifts are no less important in their supportive role. “Every single member is absolutely necessary for the smooth operation of the

spiritual body. Every gift, no matter how apparently insignificant, is vital to the effective functioning of the body of Christ” (Thomas 1999, 214). This interdependence among believers creates a web of sorts where one is effected, all are affected. Believers are connected to one another and are not intended to live outside the body. “The mutual ministry of gifts rules out the lone wolf. No one is gifted enough, wise enough, or strong enough to live apart from others” (Flynn 1974, 21).

While every member of the body of Christ has been given one or more spiritual gifts, this does not assume the believer is using their gift. “Though not every believer is exercising his gift, nor even knows what it is, nevertheless every child of God has received one or more gifts to be used for the upbuilding of the church, and for which one day he will render an account” (Flynn 1974, 18). The faith and responsibility that comes with receiving a gift from the Holy Spirit should also urge and move the believer to activity in using their gift or gifts. God’s intention for believers is to be active in sharing the faith and building up the body of Christ. “The church was never design by God to include spectators” (Stanley 1999, vii).

Recognizing Spiritual Gifts

Believers are charged with the responsibility of recognizing their spiritual gifts for the good of the body. “You are responsible for identifying your gift, developing it, and then using it for the glory of God” (Stanley 1999, vii). Christianity is a journey in which the believer’s faith is designed to be in constant use. So, too, in the recognition of spiritual gifts as the believer understands his role in the body. “The development of your spiritual gifts begins with an act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that He can and will

work through you” (Stanley 1999, 105). As the believer finds his place of service in the body, he is affirmed by the Holy Spirit. Where tasks before conversion may have seemed menial and without merit, now the believer can find joy in those same tasks and be blessed. “Recognizing our spiritual gifts can also make service for God a real blessing instead of a burden” (Baxter 1983, 66). Believers can now have a sense of meaning and accomplishment. This new sense of worth and meaning could also lead to a person’s job satisfaction and ultimately longevity.

There are methods of discovering and being affirmed in recognizing one’s spiritual gift. First, “we need the responses of other people” (Thomas 1999, 208). Just as God will use a new believer to build up the body of Christ, he also uses the responses and voices of other believers to affirm one’s gifts and purpose. With this approach, however, there also needs to be insight in whom the believer looks to for affirmation and advice. The believer should “seek out the reaction of others who are mature and respected Christians” (Thomas 1999, 208). Since these gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, only Christians will understand their source, purpose, and power.

Next, a believer should experiment with gifts in order to better see how he fits into the body of believers. While there are spiritual gifts inventories available that a believer can take to identify a spiritual gift, the most effective way is for the believer to experiment in different areas of service to see which he is most affirmed in. “No amount of spiritual-gift surveys can replace this. Experimentation is the proving ground where actual discovery comes” (Thomas 1999, 207). During this experimentation there is no better affirmation in recognizing one’s spiritual gift than the Holy Spirit’s comfort and peace. “When a person experiments in one or more of the eight areas, he or she will

sense an inner satisfaction not found in others, a satisfaction consisting of knowing the special worthwhileness of the activity in which he or she has just engaged” (Thomas 1999, 207).

The Duty in Spiritual Gifts

Heaven is the reward of belief in Christ, however, there must be purpose for believers while they remain in the world. “God would have taken us to heaven immediately at conversion had He no purpose for us here” (Flynn 1974, 15). Believers are to bring glory to God through Jesus by spreading the Good News and building up the body of Christ, the church. When one makes a decision for Christ, they are also making the commitment to live a changed life in which serving others is a priority. “When God reveals your gift or gifts, you are immediately under obligation to use them for His glory” (Baxter 1983, 73). The believer should respond to this obligation not out of duty but compelled by love to serve the One who made reconciliation with God possible. The Apostle Paul understood this great responsibility as he received and used his gifts of service. “The burden of the gift pressured him to preach. The stewardship of the gift necessitated that he preach. But the joy of the gift inspired him to preach!” (Baxter 1983, 73).

Believers are not expected to use their gifts to no end or without purpose, they become part of a larger organism. “For every gift the Holy Spirit bestows, the Spirit has planned a sphere of service” (Flynn 1974, 17). Just as the Spirit gives the gift, he has also set aside an environment or ministry for the believer to exercise their gift. While a spiritual gift is given to an individual, it is also given to the church at large. “The gifts

were given to the church as a body, and not just to individuals. The purpose of the gifts is, therefore, tied to the church as a corporate grouping of individuals endowed with spiritual gifts, that the total body may be equipped to function” (Baxter 1983, 78). This alone implies that if believers are not using and exercising their spiritual gifts, then the body becomes weak and even dysfunctional.

As it has been stated that believers can have more than one gift, these gifts would complement each other when in use. “Two or more gifts may often operate simultaneously, blending together. Just as a candle on a three-branch candelabra may shine separately and distinctly while the other two remain unlit or two or three may shine jointly, so a person may have just one gift in exercise, or at another time gifts may glow comingled” (Flynn 1974, 19). For example, a believer may have the gifts of teaching, insight, and wisdom. When in front of his class, all three gifts may be in use, whereas when he is studying only insight and wisdom may be active.

Leadership Technique

The leader must have techniques which project the understanding that he has vision for where he is leading others. “Where there is no vision, people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). The seriousness of leadership is such that peoples lives are at stake, and the responsibility of the leader is to the extent that he is accountable for those following him. The ability to see, understand, and effectively pursue vision is critical in leadership technique. “Without vision, the last place you ought to be is in a leadership post, regardless of the underlying reason” (Barna 1992, 25). The leader, above all people, should know where the organization or team is going. Along with this vision should come

the commitment to share that vision with others. Leadership techniques should incorporate an effective means by which others may know what the vision is and how it will be accomplished. Vision is essential to good leaders; without it they have nowhere to go. Succinctly put, “leaders must know where they’re going if they expect others to willingly join them on the journey” (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 23). In one regard leaders do go alone, but they are not out there alone. They need others to make the vision a reality and so the team ventures out as well. There are no successful leaders who can legitimately say they accomplished their goal with no other help or assistance. One such visionary and company is The Walt Disney Corporation, few organizations today have the staying power that the Disney Corporation has enjoyed. While the name of the company bears the name of one man, the organization itself was built and is maintained by a large group of people who share in the vision. That Walt Disney so readily acknowledged the value of collaboration is a measure of his greatness – or perhaps the cause of it (Capodagli and Jackson 1999, 79).

“In those churches where clear, substantive, productive communication takes place consistently, growth is more likely to occur than in churches where effective communication is a hit-or-miss affair. Articulating the vision is one of the most important types of communication” (Barna 1992, 132). Communicating the vision and means to the group allows them to not only understand where they are going but allows them the opportunity to own the goal which the group is trying to reach. People must invest and believe in what they are trying to accomplish. Embracing the concept gives people the opportunity to internalize the goal. When an individual or team takes personal ownership of the vision, they become more passionate and committed to seeing it realized.

Finally, leadership technique should incorporate unconditional servanthood. The leader should seek to serve those who are following. This allows people to see that the leader is actually serving a greater purpose than himself by serving and empowering others. "Whoever wants to be become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44-45).

Personal Character in Leadership

Personal character is a component that can make or break an institution or philosophy. The ideas and principles brought forth by the leader should be reflected in the organization or ideas he represents. "Character – the inner world of motives and values that shapes our actions – is the ultimate determiner of the nature of our leadership. It empowers our capacities while keeping them in check. Character weaves such values as integrity, honesty, and selfless service into the fabric of our lives, organizations, and cultures" (Thrall 1999, 2). The leader who desires followers must show himself to be a person who is genuine in their dealings with others; there would be no other motives other than ones presented. The personal character of a leader should be one of integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness. This leader should align themselves with truth and live it out personally and corporately. "On the character ladder, we must never mistake "alignment to please" with "alignment with truth," either in our responses to authority figures or in other's responses to our authority" (Thrall 1999, 103). This alignment with truth should be the measuring rod by which all actions and attitudes of the leader are measured. If a leader is to be "faulted" on anything they should always err on the side of

truth. When a leader chooses to please others he begins a downward spiral in integrity. This is due to the understanding that one can never please everyone all the time, attempting to do so undermines truth and fairness. The leader should also subject himself to the higher authority of truth, obeying what he knows to be true. "Obedience from the heart develops trust and acceptance" (Thrall 1999, 104). The leader should seek to take on the character of Christ as being the ultimate servant-leader. "Ultimately, our standards for character should not come from tests, but rather from God" (Thrall 1999, 100).

Leadership Characteristics

"Leadership has about it a kinesthetic feel, a sense of movement. Leaders "go first." They're pioneers, they begin the quest for a new order and venture into the unexplored territory and guide us to new and unfamiliar destinations" (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 36). Leadership is what it means to go, travel, and guide; it evokes images of breaking new ground and going where no individual, company, or ministry has gone before. Images of attempting and accomplishing amazing ministry, business, and athletic feats coincide with leadership. "Leadership is a calling, a vocation, not a position. It is a skill one performs; it is a service one renders. True leadership is a working relationship among group members" (Lewis 1996, 46). The old saying, "great leaders are born" may carry with it some truth and validity but it mistakenly implies that leadership cannot be learned. Leadership does not simply happen; it can be taught, learned, and developed (Giuliani 2002). Leaders must have opportunity and reason to lead. This happens not only through circumstances but also through the encouragement of others. Like Abraham, leadership may signify to get moving without even knowing what the end looks like.

Leadership is more than simply accomplishing a goal; it is something much bigger than that. It is about taking people on a journey (Stanley 2003). The goal is simply the end result, along the way people should be stretched and understand more about who they are and what they are capable of doing individually and corporately. When a leader is truly effective, those under him/her will be motivated to please their leader (Briner and Pritchard, 1997). Those under the leader know they are being looked after corporately and individually.

Leadership is more than someone yelling "follow me," it is about a relationship out of mutual respect. "Leadership is a reciprocal process between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow" (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 19). Long-lasting and wise leadership does not rule with an iron fist, making demands and bringing about punishment for those who do not measure up. It is about a relationship where everyone knows and understands their role. Leaders do not command and control, they serve and support (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). If any one leader had the right and position to demand to be followed it was Jesus, the Creator and Sustainer of the earth. And yet, He chose another way to come and live among man. Christ took the role and position of a commoner among the people. "Christ's strongest leadership trait, His servant attitude, shows us a way to manage and motivate people to willing action by helping them become all they were created to be in reaching their fullest potential" (Hind 1989, 54). The model leader then, is the one who empowers and invests his life in others.

Followers will go to great lengths if they know their leader not only cares for them but sees themselves as one of their own. Leaders eat with their troops, which means he has personal contact with those under his care and shares in their experiences (Briner

and Pritchard, 1997). When the time comes and a ministry goes through a difficult time, those following know that there is a trustworthy leader they can follow; one who instills courage in the hearts of those who follow (Stanley 2003). True leadership is about encouragement and convincing others they can do more than they believe they can as they press on to the shared goal. "Discouragement may be tough to handle, but it's certainly not impossible. Remember, it is not a terminal disease" (Swindoll 1978, 97).

Leaders are responsible for the enormous task of setting the tone of the team (Capodagli and Jackson, 1999). Communication is about dialogue, not monologue. A team leader should not lose sight of the goal in light of fostering relationships, rather the goals and relationships should coincide with one another in establishing common ground among followers. A successful leader will establish and manage a climate that encourages creativity while keeping team members on track to accomplish assigned goals (Capodagli and Jackson, 1999), giving individual team members the encouragement and freedom to explore their different areas of interest in ministry.

The leader is also broken before the Lord; known as a person who is not afraid or hesitant to fall before God and open his heart and emotions to him. "Nehemiah was called to build the wall, but first he wept over the ruins. A leader must have compassion" (Swindoll 1978, 35). God is never simply an idea or someone who gives the leader what he asks for, he is the boss who asks the leader to partner with him in accomplishing a task or goal. This relationship is evident and visible to those who see the leader throughout the day. And in the leader's wisdom he constantly consults his Father about everyday tasks. This upholds the idea that leaders are ultimately followers. "The mark of a serious leader is he goes first to God with the problem" (Swindoll 1978, 37). True leaders are servants

of God and others. In this responsibility, God raises them up to attempt and accomplish great things.

Management Skills

Along with being an effective leader one must strive for wisdom in using management skills. This bears a great deal of importance in that there must be organization and structure in order to pursue and complete the task at hand. This organization and skill must also incorporate the ability to know and understand people. As Scripture puts it “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). This challenges the manager to not be naive, yet be trusting and open to others.

Proper management is something that happens over time. As the vision grows, as well as the number of people following the vision, the skills and organization to keep these things in line must grow as well. Skilled management must evolve. “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much” (Luke 16:10). Like leadership, management must be tried and tested.

This skill should also effectively place others in positions where they are most gifted and can best serve the vision and purpose. Wisdom in understanding how each person may best serve can be crucial to a healthy pursuit of the goal. Once people have embraced and owned the goal, they should be placed in positions where they will most effectively serve the purpose. This requires the management skills needed to move and train people in their respective positions. It also motivates the manager to continually challenge and encourage those who are working under him. Leadership and management

are two sides of the same coin. Each one distinct, yet functions properly and effectively when utilized together.

The Call to Ministry

It is evident in Scripture and in the lives of believers that God desires to enlist and include believers in His work. Could God accomplish His task without the assistance of man? Yes. And yet because of His great love for mankind to know him more, he asks those who love him to be a part of His ongoing work. “God has always called human beings to share in the divine mission in the world – and he still does” (Johnson 2002, ix). It is not surprising, then, that God would continue to call out those believers for special service. “Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to His summons and service” (Guinness 1998, 29).

Since God is a God of creativity, His call may come to a person in a number of ways; perhaps after working in a particular area of ministry. The thought about serving God in that capacity full-time begins to foster the idea of doing exactly that. “There are those for whom the call comes as a growing conviction. It may emerge through an upbringing in the life and work of the church, with the prospect of serving it in full-time ministry evolving as a professional option” (Watson 1982, 29). For others the call may come in a different way altogether. Many is the time when, after a youth camp worship service or mission trip, young people may begin to understand that God has placed before them a life called to vocational ministry. “The call of God to a vocation begins as an idea

in your mind, often triggered by an event” (Johnson 2002, 21). This form of calling is followed up by the individual seeking more into what they believe God is showing them. Individuals experiencing these types of calling are being summoned and invited by God to a life of service to the body of believers. “Individuals are called to carry out special tasks for the church and through the church” (Montgomery 1981, 16). So it is not only the call to serve the body but to also include the body in carrying out ministry and the work of Christ. The church becomes the vehicle through which God accomplishes His task.

Those called must also understand that they are being challenged to live to the approval of God alone. The distraction of having the approval of others or the popularity of the position are very real, nonetheless, it is not others approval the one who is called should be seeking or trying to fulfill. “A life lived listening to the decisive call of God is a life lived before one audience that trumps all others – the Audience of One” (Guinness 1998, 70).

Youth ministers sometimes face the stigma that the call to youth ministry is a somewhat lesser call than, for example, that of pastor or minister of music. God calls whom he calls and to the positions of ministry he has planned for them in fulfilling His purpose. It is not left to the individual to decide in what capacity he will serve. Rather, the call of all believers is a call to obedience and service. “It is the responsibility of the lay leadership and the other pastors at a church to remind everyone that youth ministry is a calling” (Borthwick 1983, 77). The church and youth ministers need to be reminded that youth ministry is a calling, set apart by God just like any other pastoral staff position. Sometimes these positions are overlooked or are perceived as less since they are not in front of the church family on a consistent basis.

The Call and the Individual

On one front, this writer struggled with inadequateness and unworthiness with the call to ministry. In fact, these two things almost kept this writer out of ministry altogether. "A sense of unworthiness and doubt accompany virtually every response to God's call. The problem is too big, the task too large, the work too strenuous for our paltry abilities" (Schnase 1991, 42). The problem for some is that they rely too much on their abilities in pursuing and achieving these challenges when it is God who does the empowering and the giving of abilities to reach the goals. Those called do, however, have the responsibility and charge to further themselves in several aspects. "I believe it is incumbent on called ones to go to their ministry tasks armed with skills and knowledge, passion and principles, cultural awareness and theological vision" (Lamport 1999).

When one feels God is calling and working through the many facets of what that means, there must be a point when the one called does in fact acknowledge it and get on board with God in ministry. "Accepting the call of God into our lives means responding positively to God's perceived intention for us and emerging from the struggle in peace" (Johnson 2002, 25). While it may be viewed by some as giving up much of what the world has to offer, it provides a deeper meaning and understanding of one's life than what the world has to offer. Also, while the call to ministry is one where humility is essential, hearing God's call bestows unequalled honor to the minister (Johnson 2002).

It is important in the physical and spiritual life of the minister to continue to understand who they are in ministry. The many frustrations and hindrances of the called life is filled with reasons to leave the call behind. Ministers need to remind themselves of God's calling on their lives (Johnson 2002). This constant reminder is helpful and

essential if the minister is going to continue to be healthy in ministry. Where verbal affirmation and encouragement may be lacking, the one called should continue to listen spiritually for God's encouragement and affirmation. Those who thrive in ministry regularly take time to reflect on God's calling in their life (Lawson and Keehn, 2000). This connection to God gives the minister the confidence needed to persevere, particularly during those times when nothing seems to go right. "I sensed that I really matter, that what I do has significance, that God can use me. I felt part of something so much bigger than myself, a small trickle pouring into a running river whose currents are eternal" (Schnase 1991, 27).

Working Through the Call

As one recognizes the call and begins to understand the part they play in it, the individual will work through it while understanding more of who they are and whose they are. Sometimes people will be misguided by their own ambitions and believe they are called to ministry. Again, the camp experience may draw those who feel they are called to ministry but this can be driven by the ego and the desire to be in the spotlight. "We need a solid understanding, or theology, of calling. I often sense that people understand calling to be merely feelings stemming from prayer, ideas, or thoughts" (Wright 2004). This is one of the reasons why those in ministry and leadership need to be able to discern between an individual's desire and the call of God. Those who feel like they are called must listen for affirmation and wisdom from those around them. Even this is just one more aspect of a system in checks and balances in understanding the call to ministry.

A calling is internal and external, subjective and objective. The internal comes from our prayer lives, as well as the thoughts and feelings that arise, as we consider the

direction God wants us to take. The external comes from the offer from a church to move into a position. It also comes from the feedback we receive from others who know us well and can give us a fair assessment of whether or not the position, and even the move, is right for us. It's subjective, in that we can gain a sense and follow intuition; and yet it's objective, in that people who know us well can tell us if a particular position is right for us. (Wright 2004)

Even with these checks and balances in place, discernment on the individual's part must play an active role in the perception and understanding of what is being presented to them. "Discernment is the process of determining what is God's call to us and what is not" (Johnson 2002, ix). One way in which an individual can ascertain God's will for them is through others. God will use the voice of someone else to be His audible voice in many situations. The called one should seek out someone who will be honest and tell them the truth even if it may not be something the person wants to hear. Finding a trusted friend to discuss this matter is pivotal in affirming God's call (Johnson 2002). This friend should be one who has a healthy and growing spiritual life and is known for their readiness to pray. Seeking out someone who is not growing spiritually could result in being misled and making the wrong decision.

Another way in which a person can work through their call is to test it. For example, if an individual is feeling the call to youth ministry the person should get more involved with the youth, perhaps in more of the behind the scenes processes so the individual can get a better picture of what it takes to accomplish tasks and goals. Speaking with the current youth minister about this would also allow him to put the individual in positions to better understand what goes on. This constant testing in search of understanding God's will also helps us stay connected to God. "Testing the call to ministry is our opportunity to mature to a new and more sustaining understanding"

(Schnase 1993, 15). This not only helps us understand our call but the process is designed to grow the individual in maturity; all in preparation for ministry.

Finally in working through the call to ministry, the person should begin to devise a plan as to how to accomplish short-term goals. Having made these moves to clarify and validate your call, begin developing a strategy. "Pray for guidance from God" (Johnson 2002, 27). Once the call is made and accepted, a plan should be made as to how and when the individual will be in a place of ministry and the steps that will need to be taken to grow that ministry.

Challenges in the Call

The call to vocational ministry is a constant exercise of faith. Many times one does not get the complete picture of what and where they will be in ministry. If an individual had the total picture of all that was to come for them in ministry, it could give them the urge to bring about a change in the plan. "God's call cannot be manipulated or shaped by human hands but must be obeyed without any certain knowledge of where it will lead. Therefore, its way is always dark, lighted by only a tiny flicker of faith that creates enough courage for one step at a time" (Johnson 2002, 11). This walking in darkness with only a few feet lit ahead of the person creates trust and dependence on God which needs to carry over into every aspect of their professional and personal life.

As one reads Paul's life of ministry in the New Testament, it is readily seen that he was barraged with trials and challenges in his faith. The minister today is also bombarded with opposition in various forms, such personal attacks and resistance to their leadership, but the one called can take heart that God is still in control of what seems to

be chaos at the time. "A spiritual leader must not be surprised about what he enters into and experiences" (Blackaby and Brandt 1997, 16). The fact that not only does God know about these attacks but also provides a way through them should be of great comfort to the minister. Again, these challenges in the faith, particularly in the call to ministry, are orchestrated to grow the minister's experience in faith and develop moment by moment dependency on the One who called.

Responsibilities of the Call

With a tremendous call comes great responsibility, which should not be taken lightly or for granted. The call of God is a call to servanthood. A minister can quickly find himself in trouble when he forgets or mistreats the Gospel he is called to serve. "You are the custodian of the most important information in the world. You are a specialist in what God has to say to people through the Bible. Your divine calling far supercedes all other professions" (Blackaby and Brandt 1997, 22). While the world may place a high value on a professional athlete, actor, or actress, there cannot be a price placed on the position of God's called.

The minister is also expected to keep in constant touch with God. The one who is called should continually desire to not only maintain, but to grow in their relationship with the One called them. When this communication, or connection, is broken or compromised, the minister places himself and those under his care in very real danger. For the minister, communicating with God is not an option. "There is no possibility of a person being a spiritual leader who does not understand the absolute priority and urgency of being a person of prayer" (Blackaby and Brandt 1998, 14). The Bible paints a clear

picture of the spiritual leader of a group of believers as the shepherd of the group. In the same way, the minister needs to think of himself as a redemptive shepherd. “Your role then, as a spiritual catalyst, is to bring all of the people of God He entrusts to you into the fullest possible personal and corporate relationship with the loving Christ, God being your helper” (Blackaby and Brandt 1997, 19).

The minister called by God, in remembering that there is a higher standard than what the world conveys, must also remember that sometimes the methods in dealing with others will be beyond what the world would imagine. “If you are to lead the people of God, you must be a *spiritual leader*” (Blackaby and Brandt 1997, 12). While the world may encourage others to “look out for number one,” the leader called by God seeks to serve and look out for others and to see others as more important than themselves. Although it has been mentioned several times, it bears repeating that the minister called by God should revisit their call and remember the point of acceptance to it. “One of the most valuable tasks of ministry is the reexamination of our call” (Schnase 1991, 31).

Finally, part of the responsibility of the minister called by God is doing whatever it takes to not only see that others succeed but to see that other areas of ministry succeed as well. Ministers need to make the effort to nurture staff unity. “Be a fan of other ministry areas in your church. Focus on your common ministry calling” (Lawson and Keehn 2000). The minister would do well to keep in mind that the same God who singled them out and called them is the same God who called others to ministry as well. This commonality among staff members is a way in which each one should feel a sense of accountability and responsibility. And working on staff should be a great joy. “Your work relationships can make your ministry a joy or a misery. Staff relationships that deteriorate

into animosity or indifference suck the joy out of a thriving ministry” (Lawson and Keehn 2000).

As the call is something to be nurtured and constantly cared for, it is also a tremendous source of strength and stability in the life of the one who is called. There is something about this special call that brings about balance to the lives it touches and allows the one it chooses to see things for what they truly are. “A true call will persist when other offers try to turn us aside, and will be a bulwark for survival when the going gets tough” (Flynn 1992, 23). This call is more than a passing experience and becomes who the minister is and even how he is known. Within the call the minister shall certainly find the answer to the question, “why am I here?” It is eternally deep and infinitely rewarding. “The call, one of our richest spiritual resources, is our way considering carefully whom we serve, and why. If we lose touch with that call, we lose the higher vision, the treasure at the heart of our faith that makes sacrifice worthwhile and ministry meaningful” (Schnase 1991, 20). Because God is alive, so too, are his truths. The call of God is not something that one can own or buy, rather it is something that owns the believer. “Embracing a call from God must move us steadily toward being fully embraced by the call of God. We don’t possess the call; the call possesses us” (Johnson 2002, 115).

Also, the call to ministry is not something that God revokes or changes His mind about in a believer. Even if a person refuses the call and walks away from it when it is presented by God, it remains. There are many ministers who came back at a later point in their life to accept their call. “If you should miss the call or successfully resist the call for a period of time, be assured it will not go away” (Johnson 2002, 27). Each call is as unique as the individual to which it is being presented. And God may call others at

different times in their lives. Some may have had the call at an early age, where others received the call as an adult. This can be summed up in a simple statement: “follow your calling, whatever it is” (Olshine 2004).

Youth Ministry

By comparison to other ministries in the church, youth ministry is still in its infancy. The idea to have one individual whose responsibility is to teach, nurture, and reach young people would be foreign in Biblical times. The teaching of children and youth was something that was inbred into, not only each family, but into the community of faith as a whole. “Not only were children to be taught the faith in every conceivable situation in life; the children were to be taught the faith by the whole community, not just members of their immediate family” (Patterson 1984, 44). Therefore, there simply wasn’t a need for a youth minister as long as the faith community and families remained intact.

Today, however, is a different picture altogether. One would be hard pressed to find a society in history that is more the antithesis of what the family structure was in that time. “Parents in the church today feel threatened and out of their depth when it comes to communicating the message of the Gospel to their children. They are not only insecure in their grasp of the Gospel, they are insecure in their grasp of their children” (Patterson 1984, 46). Beyond the systematic breakdown of the family is the dysfunction of society as it relates to God. The family unit is a fatality of the deterioration of society. “A study suggests that thirty-four percent of church-going adults have never experienced God in worship. Another study revealed that one of seven youth and young adults says that belonging to a church is not necessary to being religious” (Dean 2002).

Youth ministry was conceived or grew out of a need to give students a spiritual leader, to help nurture them in their walk and to bring other youth to the faith.

Youth ministry is not a business, primarily dependent on presentation, programs, strategy or market share in order to flourish. It's a spiritual activity. Youth ministry is not a social science, primarily dependent on cultural insight, research, or precision in order to flourish. It's a spiritual activity. Youth ministry is not a human activity, primarily dependent on human interests, human relationships, or human nature in order to flourish. It's a spiritual activity. (Patty 2005, 2)

Even now there is a growing number of youth ministers who are ill prepared to handle the responsibilities and challenges of youth ministry. While some are legitimately called, they enter ministry empty handed. "Although one's *call* should be the solitary basis for entering youth ministry, one's *preparation* for the profession of youth ministry has been seriously neglected" (Lamport 1999). In an effort to better prepare and support those in youth ministry, many companies have been birthed to help educate youth ministers. These are great companies who are doing phenomenal work but many youth ministers still do not understand. There are great concerns for the indignant people in the profession of youth ministry who refuse sufficient training for their jobs because they have been with idea books (Lamport 1999). Formal training and education in youth ministry are being side stepped for a quick fix in new games and technology.

No discernible behavior difference occurs in the lives of "students" after spending, in some cases, eighteen years in Sunday School. What I do hear is anguish from the unfortunate ones left behind after the youth minister has left (again) either to another job (less than two years on average), another profession (less than five years on average), or finally (and mercifully) to receive formal education. Let me be clear: formal ministry education is not the answer to all maladies in the world of youth ministry, but it's a lot better than ignorance. (Lamport 1999)

While many of these organizations specializing in youth ministry are supportive and valuable, there is simply no substitute for formal education in one's field.

The Youth Minister

The youth minister has numerous challenges before him and as culture changes is always confronted with how to flex and change with it, without compromising the Gospel. This still says nothing of the challenges the parents of youth bring to the equation. On one hand the youth minister is needed and on the other when things are not done exactly as parents think they should be done the youth minister becomes the enemy. "The first two years you can do nothing wrong. The second two years you can do nothing right. The fifth and sixth years of a ministry, either you leave, or the people who think you can do nothing wrong leave; or you change, or they change, or you both change" (Anderson 1986, 77).

One challenge, in particular for the youth minister, is to foster and convey a sense of community in the lives of students. The youth minister becomes a social coach in helping students adjust to society and into becoming more of an adult and less of a child. "From a sociological perspective, youth ministers are given the task of socializing young people into the dominant values of the culture" (Campolo 1984, 25). And since many adults feel disconnected from their faith and from their children, this figure and position arises to bridge the gap and serve the family. "The youth worker's role is to take up the slack for the beleaguered parents. The youth worker is chosen for his or her ability to "relate" to young people, something which so many parents today feel they cannot do" (Patterson 1984, 46). These ministry specialists rely on their ability to relate to the youth culture and to reach them for Christ. Relationships in ministry are vital to the ongoing faith community. Churches and youth ministers need to understand this element of ministry. "If we take seriously the idea that youth ministry is relational, we need to strive

for long-term positions, so that we see our kids as individuals rather than just numbers in our programs” (Wright 2004).

Youth ministers who stay have found the balance needed in order to have extended tenure. Some find it automatically, others finally get it after several years and, unfortunately, positions. “As we can all observe, one can be called but ineffective; whereas, one can be effective, but not called. It seems both factors – receiving a call and engaging in preparation – make for the kind of person most desirous for the long-haul in the profession of youth ministry” (Lamport 1999). Ministry, particularly youth ministry, is a learning process. Each year in youth ministry is ideally built on the previous year. That said, however, an effective youth pastor would not claim to finally have achieved perfection in youth ministry. Rather, the amount of repeated mistakes from one year to the next are hopefully reduced. This is a sign of true leadership, the ability to learn from past mistakes and move forward. “True leaders don’t bail out when the going gets tough. They evaluate and make adjustments and stay the course” (Wright 2004). It is not a question of what will the youth minister do *if* the tough times come, but what will the youth minister do *when* the tough times come. The time for him to decide to stay is before the tough time hits, waiting to decide can greatly increase the probability of leaving prematurely.

Youth ministers reap a number of benefits by staying in one position for five or more years (Wright 2004). They get to see visions and goals come to fruition that have been prayed over by students, adult workers, and the church as a whole. Also, when the church sees the youth minister is there to stay, more leaders emerge to help with the ministry and parents are more apt to trust the youth minister when he makes it clear that

he is planted and committed there. This takes unnecessary stress and anxiety out of a situation and allows the youth minister and adults to concentrate on ministry.

Like any other area of ministry, the work itself can sometimes be a distraction to what is important. It is not inconceivable to see that one can get so busy doing ministry and going through the motions, and yet, find themselves spiritually empty. "I was spending all my time doing the work of God without being a person of God" (Fields 1998, 33). It seems so ironic and yet it is such a reality and challenge for those in ministry. The youth minister must remember that his spiritual life and personal walk with God is of the highest priority and while God may be pleased with the minister, he is never impressed. "Doing God's work isn't as important as being God's person. Since I tend to be a people-pleaser, I need a continual reminder that God is more concerned about my spiritual health than about my youth ministry hype" (Fields 1998, 36). Problems for youth ministers sometimes begin when they try to please individuals or groups instead of pleasing God and remaining true and focused on what he has placed before them. It is not through the minister's power that ministry is accomplished or even attempted, but in God's power alone. When ministers try to do it without God's empowerment and blessing, failure is sure to follow. Submission should be a part of the minister's life and work. In so doing, God is given the freedom to work and use the minister as he sees fit. "Allow your abilities to be ignited by the divine power that is revealed in a believer's life. Rejoice that your presence and your words give the power of God another opportunity to be communicated to students whom God loves" (Fields 1998, 36). In a society where entertainment plays such a huge role in the individual's life, it is easy for ministries to fall into the trap of being a social group. While activities in and of themselves are not

harmful, when they become the focal point of a ministry that ministry has twisted off its foundation and love. “Strengthen your youth ministry by placing a higher priority on being rather than doing. I’ve seen spiritual integrity play such an important role in youth ministry that I can honestly say that I would rather have one godly volunteer than ten skilled volunteers who don’t rely on God” (Fields 1998, 37).

Youth ministry is not a theory void of contact, it is a passion for God and students. “A healthy youth ministry doesn’t begin with ideas, but with spiritual leaders” (Fields 1998, 28). Ideas and activities are an important aspect of youth ministry but they are born out of a leader’s desire to glorify God in their lives and in the lives of others. Students are growing up in a society where, unfortunately, they have seen it all; very little surprises them anymore. Yet, some youth ministers feel as though they are trying to compete with the world in entertaining students. “The students in your youth ministry don’t need your clever ideas and great programming skills. They need a living model – a man or woman of God who is passionate about his or her faith” (Fields 1998, 38). This passionate minister is much more the exception than the rule in society, which makes students want to follow them all the more.

Youth ministers must stay grounded in their understanding of what they do and how they do it. “It is truly humbling to think about the awesome privilege and responsibility of being used by God” (Fields 1998, 35). Being daily confronted with the truth that God uses the hands and voice of the youth minister to accomplish His purpose allows the youth pastor to remain focused and humble before God. This becomes increasingly difficult in light of the many distractions thrown at the youth minister and the temptations that come with a growing youth group.

The Church and Its Programs

Youth ministry is not an independent endeavor, it is one element, or program, in the total make up of the church. Youth pastors must realize this and work in conjunction with the other church programs.

The church is an irreplaceable means of God's grace, the context in which youth ministry best sits and out of which it expresses mission to the campus and the world. Youth ministry efforts should not be attempted apart from the local church. As alluring as a nimble, free-floating, untethered ministry to youth may seem, the best base of context is the people of God acting as the potency of the church universal, the family of God to which all believers belong, and to somehow disparage the efforts of ministries outside of the life and authority of the local church. We are merely affirming that there is peculiar vibrancy and fidelity to a ministry that is within the daily living of the Christian church as expressed in a local congregation. (Patty 2005, 6)

Many youth ministers make the mistake of trying to do too much too soon.

Whether it is being over zealous on their part or simply ignorance of trying to bring about too much change in a small amount of time, youth ministers can quickly get off on the wrong foot if they are not careful and considerate. "We need to realize that we can't go in and impact a program in the first year. Our first-year goals will always be much more than we can accomplish" (Youthworker 1984, 40). Planning and timing in the youth minister's first year at a church is crucial and will set the pace for the next few years. It would be wiser to spend the first year in simply investing in relationships and then using those relationships to power effective programs. "Thriving youth pastors know that well-functioning programs simply don't have the satisfaction "kick" that comes from the tiny, progressive evidence of God's work in kids' lives" (Lawson and Keehn 2000). Youth ministers need to be about investing their lives in the lives of students instead of investing their lives in programs. While some programs are effective, they are temporal. A

student's soul will live forever. "The short of it is this: The goal of youth ministry is to make disciples" (Patty 2005, 3).

While it is important to be goal driven and pursuing the task at hand, youth ministry itself never comes to a place where it ends. "Youth ministry is never finished, and more can always be done" (Fields 2002). When a certain class or even generation of students come through and heads off into adulthood, the next generation of students are already well on their way and in need of the same, if not more, attention and nurturing as the last group. These groups that pass through youth ministry will go on to, hopefully, impact the church with their leadership and service. One of the biggest mistakes a church can make is in viewing and conveying to its youth that they are the church of tomorrow. Philip Briggs, Distinguished Professor of Collegiate Ministry and Youth Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said, "strong youth ministry emerges not from viewing young people as the church of tomorrow, but as an important part of the church today" (Briggs 2000). The youth of the church have an unlimited amount of ministry to offer the church at large. Many times students lead the way in service and mission work and bring a certain amount of excitement to worship services. To say or imply that they are not a part of the church's life and mission is tragic and destructive to the youth program.

It is from this type of attitude that many youth ministers feel discouraged and beat down in their called area of ministry. Unfortunately, many of them buy into this attitude and leave the church before they actually see the importance of their work. "There is a boneyard of potential nation-changers who have become so discouraged they have either left the ministry or now hobble along wounded and ineffective. Survival is

their way of life” (Rentz 2001). This survival approach to ministry is far from the abundant life and ministry Jesus called them to and yet tragically, youth ministers buy into and believe this survival-type of persona. Just as the youth minister has a responsibility to God in fulfilling the ministry placed before him, the church also has the responsibility to nurture and do what it takes to help its youth ministry succeed. “With only 2,550 full-time youth pastors and 23 million teenagers in this country, we cannot afford to lose one youth pastor to discouragement or mistreatment” (Rentz 2001).

One mistake new and seasoned youth ministers make is in trying to create instant results. With the youth ministry resource market flooded with books of ideas, programs, games, etc., the allure of quick growth in youth ministry is tempting. While many of these books are helpful and encouraging, they are not a replacement for quality and consistency built over time. “I was too immature to look for transferable principles that might help. Instead, I wanted an instant program to bring quick success” (Fields 1998, 30). What is successful and works for a youth ministry in one part of the country probably will not work in another. The principles, based on God’s truth, that are powering the programs are tried and true and apply to every program and ministry. One youth minister, Lisa, understands all too well how devastating programs alone can be.

She understands the seduction of an enticing youth ministry idea. For several years she placed hype above health in her leadership. Youth ministry ideas were more important than intimacy with God. Programs out-prioritized prayer. She allowed her heart to become hard and later described herself as a spiritual liar rather than a spiritual leader. (Fields 1998, 27)

Again, while programs are helpful and have their place in ministry, if left alone they can easily become the driving force behind a youth ministry. It is not a program that

brings about salvation, only God can do that. “Programs don’t work – God works. God doesn’t need a program in order to work. He doesn’t even need me” (Fields 1998, 34).

Challenges in Youth Ministry

One of the many challenges in youth ministry comes in the form of periodical emptiness. This emptiness, or lull, can sometimes be misconstrued as the time for the youth minister to leave. The veteran youth minister, however, has learned how to weather through this time and come out on the other side excited about the future. “People who are not good at navigating leave, and those who stay are those who have figured out a way to have a sustainable life and a sustainable ministry at the same time” (Dean 2002). While this may be the case for some in youth ministry who have left, it is certainly not the only reason youth ministers leave. The high turnover rate of youth ministers is not attributed to any one thing in particular, but rather any number of reasons, or excuses, to leave. “Numerous factors contribute to the high turnover rate: family conflicts, low pay, low prestige, lack of acknowledgment or respect, lack of time for development, and the treatment of the ministry as an extracurricular activity” (Dean 2002). On the other hand, there are those programs and factors that have the potential to bring about greater effectiveness in the future. These models should be seen as a set of guiding principles rather than a template from which to lead a youth ministry. “Shifting youth ministry from entertainment to long-term maturity and the discovery and implementation of spiritual gifts for church leadership, guided by a team of spiritually mature adults is a better method for the future” (Briggs 2000). While the model is sound and doable, the challenge

in it comes more from getting adults prepared to handle this new program as it may require them to be more knowledgeable and spiritually prepared to go to the next level.

Another challenge in youth ministry is the church that is looking for someone to come in and revitalize their church which has been dead and dying for some time. “They look for the one great player (youth minister) who can save the franchise (youth ministry) and developed a winning team (volunteers) that will attract the fans (students). Once a great player is identified (either hired clergy or volunteer layperson), the owners (church board, selection committee, senior pastor) settle into other pressing affairs within the organization (church)” (Fields 1998, 15). This type of scenario puts way too much pressure on the youth minister to produce results and save the church. It turns out to be a sort of suicide mission for the minister because before too long it is impossible to keep up the pace and strain of having to produce results. When it becomes too difficult the star player either leaves under the strain or is removed because of the decrease in results.

While youth ministers in general do not like or appreciate the negative connotation they sometimes get and are called glorified babysitters, second rate ministers, etc., some of this is their own undoing. Youth pastors must be dedicated to studying and acquiring knowledge. “I am appalled at the existing low standards of some in our country who assume positions of Christian leadership, including youth ministry. It is as though intellect and religion are viewed as uncomfortable acquaintances, and that eagerness and personality are more critical to an appointment in youth ministry” (Lampert 1999). This writer has even experienced some of this in a recent interview. After what seemed to be a successful interview, a call from the associate pastor conveyed that the committee had decided to pursue another candidate. This writer, wanting to know if there was anything

he could improve on in the interview process inquired as such. The associate pastor said everything was top notch, but that the committee decided to go with someone who came across as being more “fun and playful.”

Thriving in Youth Ministry

Thriving in youth ministry may conjure up ideas of large numbers and growth, exciting trips and activities, or a youth pastor who is always in demand to talk about his area of ministry and its success. While these may be true in the correct context, they are not the only indicators of thriving youth ministries. Some of what is seen on the outside in successful youth ministries is the result of what is on the inside of the youth minister’s heart. Regardless of what the world may say about ministry or even the stereotype of youth ministers, the effective youth pastor is one who is able to see his work for what it truly is. “They’re convinced their work is making a valuable and eternal impact. Thriving youth pastors know their work is vitally important – even when other church ministries clearly receive more support and attention” (Lawson and Keehn 2000). This type of youth pastor in no way feels like he is competing with other ministries for attention, but finds himself readily supporting other programs in the church.

The youth minister who thrives also knows how to empower and use a team of adult workers. In doing so the youth pastor not only frees himself up to do ministry but allows others to be involved in ministry as well.

Your volunteer staff will take care of you, but only if you keep the machinery well-oiled with good training, constant care, and prayer. By taking care of your staff, you take care of yourself. You create a supportive community. You’ve got a group of people who can free you to do ministry in ways you never imagined. (Feldmeyer 1989, 93)

Just as the youth minister is the shepherd of the youth group, he is also the spiritual caretaker of the youth ministry team as well. "Youth ministry, like other ministry, requires a team. A youth pastor working alone limits how many students he can shepherd. Many leaders find they will be effective with twenty to twenty-five students and after that the group's attendance plateaus" (Patty 2005, 212). By building, encouraging, and supporting this team of volunteers, the youth pastor creates a strong infrastructure. When a youth pastor does not build and nurture this team, he will quickly find himself burning out from doing more than one individual is capable of doing.

Thriving youth ministers also move to a place of ministry with the understanding that they are there until God so chooses to move them. Ministers who have it set in their minds that they will only be in a particular place for two years and then moving on greatly hinder the ministry they could have there, particularly if the youth and adults know of the plans to move on. "That affects the ministry negatively because we don't invest as much of ourselves when we know we're only going to be somewhere a short time" (Youthworker 1984, 35). For most who move on after such a short period of time never get to see their effectiveness or the impact they could have had on the youth ministry at a particular church. Partly because of the rampant turnover in youth ministry "veteran youth leaders claim it takes up to two years to crack through to teenagers in effective ministry" (Borthwick 1983, 76). If the average tenure is short-term, youth pastors would not come close to building relationships and attempting, let alone accomplishing, anything in ministry. When a youth minister stays beyond the expectations of the students and adults, they quickly begin to support and trust him. This creates a new excitement in the youth ministry and things quickly begin to happen.

“Effectiveness with youth will increase because the students trust the youth pastor” (Borthwick 1983, 81). And likewise, because the youth minister has established relationships with students and adults, he too, is able to delegate and empower others in ministry.

Youth pastors need to be aware of the excitement that is generated as a new youth minister comes on staff. While there will be some immediate growth due to this enthusiasm and curiosity, meaningful relationships will be what keeps them there. “The difference between an invasion and a drive-by outreach is that an invasion results in possession and rulership. A one-time outreach or a drive-by event may create awareness, but not relationships” (Ramsby 2001). In light of this, youth ministers need to see themselves as one who is going into a place to set up a home and be a part of the community.

Credibility in Youth Ministry

Like some youth, church members may also be skeptical of the intentions of the new youth minister. If adults in the church do not have children in the youth group it may be difficult for them to keep up with all the ministry and activities that are going on within that area of ministry. This puts the responsibility back on the youth pastor to do his part in making sure the entire church knows about what is going on in the youth ministry area and the results of past activities. Living in the world of technology with its numerous avenues of communication, there is really no excuse why youth ministers cannot effectively communicate their ministry’s purpose and programs to the group and church-at-large. “If you want church wide support for your ministry, you must find ways to make

your purpose and activities memorable to congregation members” (Lawson and Keehn 2000). Beyond the big events and activities, serving faithfully in the everyday ministry of the church also conveys to the congregation that the youth minister is indeed there to stay and be a part of the church and community. “If you want church members to trust you with new ministry ideas, gain their confidence through faithful ministry” (Lawson and Keehn 2000).

Another aspect of youth ministry that builds credibility is long tenure. The only way this comes about is time. It is one thing for a youth pastor to express his love for his students and church and another thing to stay there and show them this love. “Long tenure in ministry also enhances credibility. People respect and trust a person who loves them. Only over time can love be authenticated” (Anderson 1986, 77). As the youth minister lives out his commitment to his church and students, he will find that trust grows continually between himself and his church.

Preparation and Education

One of the causes of short-term youth ministry is not knowing what to expect or what was expected from the youth minister. Whether youth ministry or any other area of ministry, the individual should gather as much information about what is expected in order to reduce the amount of surprises. “When I got into youth work I didn’t know what it would involve. I thought it was just going to be “loving kids for Christ.” I was very naive about the realities of youth work” (Youthworker 1984, 37). Churches that are seeking to fill this position should have an idea of what they are looking for in a youth minister. The probability of longevity can be increased if the prospective youth minister

knows what is expected of him. When the church sets up an interview time for the potential youth pastor, it is also the minister's opportunity to interview the church's committee. "Ask good questions when you are interviewed for a position. Insist upon a good, thorough, realistic job description" (Youthworker 1984, 40). When the minister knows what is expected of them they can set up goals accordingly and gauge progress by the church's expectations of that position's job description. "The most effective youth workers are the ones who know how to focus on what's expected of them" (Fields 2002). Tragically, for the church, the students, and the youth minister, positions are being filled then quickly left open again because of a simple communication problem between the church and new youth ministers about what is expected from the youth minister and what the youth minister can expect from the church as well.

Others never get a chance to thrive because of lack of preparation and research in what it takes to do youth ministry. "Some people leave because they didn't know what youth work involves. We have to know a little bit about a lot, and we need a great deal of energy, patience, and flexibility" (Youthworker 1984, 35). Youth ministers could be identified as the jack-of-all-trades in ministry and are also expected to be master of them as well. This is why building a solid ministry team is once again so important; together the team can conceivably take on the many facets of youth ministry and thrive.

Those potentially called youth ministers will begin to see themselves as meeting an area of ministerial need instead of temporarily filling a position when the ministers become more aware and educated about the many aspects of youth ministry. As individuals who are called to youth ministry continue to study and uncover more of the importance of student ministry, it will be perceived as a legitimate vocation in ministry

and not simply a stepping stone to the pastorate. But youth ministers must do their part and take on the responsibility of approaching it as a high calling. “Study builds awareness that youth ministry is a profession to be pursued rather than a trial to be endured until someone offers a new job. It also builds expertise on youth” (Youthworker 1984, 79). Churches should also understand the minister they are seeking is not a social director or glorified babysitter. “The youth minister will be a professional who is, in effect, the church’s expert on adolescents” (Youthworker 1984, 81).

In discussing the education and preparation of the youth minister, the preparation and education of his ministry team must also be addressed. Adult volunteers should also be challenged to know more about whom they are leading. “They want to develop their skills and potential and enhance their ability to contribute and succeed” (Smith 2001, 29). Just as the youth minister has a calling to student ministry, so too, adult leaders have been called to work in the same area. By providing training for the ministry team, they become more confident and prepared to handle the many challenges of youth ministry. “Effective training keeps volunteers excited and ready to tackle new responsibilities. Without it, they may feel overwhelmed, discouraged, and incapable” (Feldmeyer 1989, 88).

Spiritual Growth and Support

Just as the youth minister has a call to nurture those under his leadership, he also has a responsibility to study and grow in his personal walk with Christ. In fact, this should be the minister’s first priority. The students and adults are relying on the youth minister to stay focused and grounded, therefore, allowing him to teach what he

experiences and learns from God. “I can only teach what I know, and this truth requires me to keep growing. This habit is especially important to maintaining a decent self-esteem” (Fields 2002). Youth ministers who thrive in ministry, especially in the midst of the many challenges youth ministry brings, are continually before God in fostering their relationship with him. These ministers are seeking the kind of encouragement, wisdom, and love that can only come from him. “Pursue spiritual vitality. Real thriving flows out of your relationship with God, where you’ll find the grace to meet your life and ministry challenges” (Lawson and Keehn 2000). Personal growth and relationship with God can be maintained in any number of ways. The important thing is to maintain it. “However you choose to maintain your spiritual growth – Bible studies, prayer, meditation – do it regularly. It’s not only important to your ministry; it’s important to your own spiritual health” (Feldmeyer 1989, 115).

Youth ministers need to have people around them who believe in their leadership and support them wholeheartedly. This support is critical to the youth minister who daily deals with phone calls from angry parents, upset teenagers, and angry older adults who do not agree with the direction and leadership of the youth program. “Thriving youth leaders gain strength from others who encourage, challenge, pray for, and believe in them” (Lawson and Keehn 2000). These relationships help balance the ongoing feelings of insecurity and inadequateness the youth minister deals with on a day to day basis.

The youth minister should also place himself under the leading of someone other than the pastor. This individual must be spiritually sound and ready to bear the burdens of the student minister. This is not only wise for newcomers to youth ministry but to veterans as well. “No matter how long they’ve been in ministry, thriving pastors

benefit from ongoing relationships with mentors” (Lawson and Keehn 2000). These mentoring relationships should be designed to be God’s voice to the minister, as well as encouraging, challenging, and able to correct when necessary. This mentoring is typically done by someone who is older than the youth minister, however, there should also be a support group of the minister’s peers that encourage and minister to him.

To Move On or Stay

To say youth ministry is filled with challenges is an understatement; with these challenges also comes disagreements, conflicts, frustrations, and disappointments. And this is just in one week. Along with each of these difficulties comes the small voice in the back of the youth minister’s mind that simply says, “just leave.” When these thoughts of bailing out come it is important to know their source. Is it the youth minister with a bad or frustrated attitude? Is it Satan trying to bring down another ministry? The key word for youth ministry is perseverance. “If your motives are pure, you’ll persevere, reproduce student ministers, be productive, and contribute effectively, all while having fun. Most conflicts arise from unclear, mixed, or impure motives” (Fields 2002). Too many times youth pastors make the decision to leave based on a temporary emotion or at the end of a bad day. These ministers mistakenly translate the day’s circumstances into God’s providential hand guiding them to leave. The damage this does goes far beyond the youth minister, the ripple effect moves throughout the students, parents, youth ministry team, and the church as a whole. “When a youth ministry professional moves after just a few years, the program suffers. The vision and direction in which the ministry was moving will likely not continue. Instead, people tend to wait for the next leader to arrive” (Wright

2004). Even so, as the youth group and church wait for the next youth minister, the program itself is not sitting idly by, it is slowing going backwards. So when the new youth minister arrives he does not pick up the program where the last minister left off, he must work and build trust among the group just to get it back to the point of where it was abandoned. The damage from this is much bigger than probably anyone realizes. That is why it is so important to remain. "I'll often encourage people to stay where they are if they can" (Wright 2004). Other than situations where reconciliation may not be possible or if there is a problem in theology or doctrine, staying should always be the first effort.

Youth ministers who remain in one position are a rare breed. There is something about them in their resolve that they have determined to remain until God releases them. "What they had in common was determination. That determination is often based on a clear vision and genuine persistence" (Wright 2004). These youth ministers clearly understand God's call on their life and will not compromise it by leaving abruptly or after a short period of time.

Thriving youth pastors have decided they'll need a mountain of evidence that God is moving them out of youth ministry before they'll jump ship. This mind-set undergirds their ministry. It helps make contentment, patience, and perseverance possible. (Lawson and Keehn 2000)

Youth ministry exists in the world's philosophy where numbers are what truly matter; having the most, spending the most, desiring the most. For the minister, whose standards should reflect those of God, this stands in direct opposition to what God says is important and valuable. Even in ministry there is the temptation to compare oneself in ministry to another, or to compare youth programs to see which one is bigger. "The only numbers that matter in real ministry deal with longevity, anyway" (Wright 2004).

Profile of the Current Study

Between the constant barrage and confusion youth go through with their new physical bodies and the messages the world sends them about themselves and the impossible image they are challenged to bear, it is no wonder youth can be utterly disoriented about themselves and their faith. “Kids are camped out in no man’s land between the spiritual forces of good and evil. Adolescence is really just another name for the front lines of the spiritual battle we wage here on earth. Two-thirds of all Christians make their commitments to follow Christ prior to age eighteen” (Lawrence 2000, 14).

When those entering youth ministry do so without thinking through what it takes to thrive and be effective, it can lead to frustration; even to the point of leaving the position altogether. “A high percentage of people who begin doing youth ministry counting on a sprint, a cruise, or a coast, begin dropping out by the second year when they discover there are sprains, curses, and costs” (Robbins 1990, 251). This premature exodus is avoidable when the individual takes the time to prepare themselves for the challenges of youth ministry, both expected and unexpected.

Relationships are the conduit through which ministry flows. And time is what it takes to build relationships. If youth ministers leave after short stays in a position, it hinders their ability to effectively build long-lasting relationships with youth. Instead, long-term youth ministers enjoy many benefits through the relationships they build with students, parents, and adult workers. “Relationships begin with sharing faith through lifestyle” (Warden 1991, 64). Students need to see the youth minister live out his faith, setting the example. When youth ministers continually have short tenures, this important example, as it pertains to the position of youth minister, is absent.

Youth are asked and encouraged to trust their youth ministers in a society which seems to breed skepticism and the idea of “looking out for number one.”

When we build relationships and then leave, the loss makes it incredibly difficult for people to trust the next person enough to get close to them. Rapid turnovers lead to students who aren't interested in getting to know the new youth worker. After all, what guarantees are there that this new person won't leave in 18 to 24 months? Some see the opportunity to seize power when they don't like the new person and know that if they make things difficult, the person will probably leave. (Wright 2004)

This goes beyond a simple issue of encouraging trust to inadvertently teaching and encouraging students to manipulate circumstances where they are unhappy or do not agree with the current leadership.

On the other hand, when a youth minister has built and earned the trust of the youth, ministry becomes more productive. One of the many benefits afforded with tenure is that “effectiveness with young people increases because they trust you” (Robbins 1998). When the issue of an unexpected or abrupt exiting of the youth minister is taken out of the scenario, youth can concentrate on the task at hand in growing in their faith and reaching out to others. Students minds can be focused on ministry, thereby increasing effectiveness.

While it is important to have the trust of students, it is equally, if not more, important to have the trust of parents. This confidence makes youth ministry even more powerful as the youth minister is able to impact the entire family instead of one or two members of it. Another benefit of staying is that “parents trust you more, which builds more continuity between families and youth ministry” (Robbins 1998).

Therefore, the current study investigated the factors leading to the longevity of youth ministers with extended tenure positions in relationship to organizational climate

factors, leadership techniques, ministerial calling, and spiritual giftedness. This study was conducted using a survey in which youth ministers with extended tenures were asked to convey their experience and expertise. This understanding was conveyed within four areas, which consisted of longevity, leadership techniques, ministerial calling, and spiritual giftedness.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This chapter presents a detailed description of the methodological design and the processes used in collecting data related to the longevity of youth ministers and their leadership techniques. It also includes the demographics of the population, samples of delimitations, limitations of generalization, as well as instrumentation and procedures in gathering data

Design Overview

Through various agencies, the researcher found individuals who met the required scope of the study. Information was then gathered via a survey of the requisite youth ministers. Key words or phrases from the surveys were compiled and analyzed for patterns of frequency and magnitude. Three youth ministers from the sample were then asked to give more insight into the responses based on their expertise of the subject matter. Those who participated in the process of gathering the data will be sent a letter of appreciation along with the results of the study.

Population

For the purpose of this research, the population was youth ministers who have been at their current church and position for ten years. Included in this study are also

ministers who have served more than ten years. These ministers represented the primary minister on staff for the youth. Their primary responsibilities included seeing to the spiritual growth of youth and developing a comprehensive youth program as part of the larger purpose and mission of the church.

Sample and Delimitation

The nature of this research utilized a sample group of youth ministers from the larger population. This specific group of ministers has been in their current positions for a minimum of ten years and has been a primary minister on staff for the youth. The population has also been on staff at the same church for the length of their tenure.

The researcher contacted appropriate agencies and individuals within state denominational organizations to inquire of their knowledge of youth ministers who fit the study's population. As these organizational leaders disclosed the contact information of each youth minister, a number was assigned to each of the youth ministers and their contact information. The numbers assigned were in chronological order beginning with the number one. For example, when a list of prospective participants was received from Lifeway, the first youth minister on the list was assigned to the number 1, the second on the list the number 2, and so on until all the names listed had numbers beside them. When two or more lists were received from individuals, the list that was received first was assigned numbers, then the next list received in order until all lists were assigned numbers

A minimum of ten youth ministers to participate in the study was targeted, however, the research design was not limited to a specific number of participants. The

study was prepared to include any number of participants in the population in so long as the minimum was satisfied. Some of the names received as being prospective participants were, upon further investigation, ineligible due to the lack of number of years at their current church.

The population was youth ministers who have been in youth ministry for ten years or more. While there are some youth ministers who stay in their positions for short periods of time, this research focused on those who have been in youth ministry for an extended amount of time. Though some called to the ministry may see youth ministry as a stepping stone to the pastorate or another area of the ministry, those involved in this study have already made long careers of youth ministry.

Secondly, youth ministers participating in the survey have been at their current church for a minimum of ten years. This not only narrowed the field of eligible participants, but it also gave the researcher the opportunity to see what type of impact remaining at one church can have on the minister and their youth, and if, in fact, the church itself played a part in retaining the minister. While it is not unheard of for those in youth ministry to make careers of it, to have remained at their current church for ten years or longer makes these ministers all the more uncommon.

Next, a delimitation of full-time youth ministers was considered. Youth ministers considered in this study had to be a primary minister who saw to the spiritual growth of youth.

Finally, each of the youth ministers asked to fill out a survey have been responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive program for youth as a

part of the larger purpose and mission of the church. This included planning activities and events that attend to the spiritual needs of youth.

Limitations of Generalization

A limitation of generalization was in regard to those youth ministers who have been in youth ministry for ten years or longer but not at the same church. The researcher chose to study the insights of the youth minister within the context of one church.

Another limitation of generalization was in the changes that may have occurred in the youth ministers title during the ten-year period. For example, a youth minister who starts out solely being responsible for the youth may later take on other ministerial responsibilities, such as missions, with their title reflecting this change. Some youth ministers who have been on staff for ten years or longer could have made additions or changes to their title. For others, God may have called them into another area of ministry, along with youth, to explore or fill a need within their church.

The limitation of generalization was also the bias of the small number of youth ministers. The research was limited to the expertise and opinions of no less than ten ministers, whereas the total opinion of the remaining population could produce different results.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this research was a survey (Appendix 2) created and used by the researcher after the researcher's supervisor suggested modifications, gave insight and approval. The researcher sought the insight of his advisor as to important areas of a youth minister's position, thereby using the advisor's expertise in the field of

youth ministry both as a staff member and as an instructor of those called to youth ministry.

The instrument, while thorough and covering a number of topics, was not designed to be a complete look at the youth minister's expertise and responsibilities but was designed to cover the topics related to the research. These topics included the following: organizational climate factors, longevity, leadership techniques, call to the ministry, spiritual gifts. From these, the nature of the relationship between the topics was examined.

The survey was intentionally created to be completed by a youth minister in a relatively short amount of time. This design aspect was to make the survey appealing to the youth minister by not requiring a lot of time to complete, yet still effective in drawing on their insight and expertise.

Procedure

Upon the approval of the researcher's supervisor, phone calls were made to individuals in denominational leadership organizations (Appendix 1) who could aid in the search for eligible youth ministers. As the names of prospective youth ministers were being sent and compiled they were assigned numbers to ensure the order in which they were received. Once a list of potential candidates was complete and the study's minimum was met, the researcher began to contact the youth ministers to verify their tenure and inquire if they would be willing to participate in the study by completing the survey. Based on the youth minister's preference, the survey was then sent via regular or electronic mail to those agreeing to participate.

If a survey was not returned in a timely manner, the youth minister was contacted by the researcher to inquire of the continued interest in participating in the study. When the completed surveys were returned, the researcher compiled and tabulated the results. Using the numbers assigned, three youth ministers were randomly selected and given the results compiled from the returned surveys. These youth ministers were asked for further insights into each survey element. Their responses were presented along with the survey results using tables and quotes in the conclusion of this study. Once the data was compiled and approved by the researcher's supervisor, the researcher sent out the complete study to the youth ministers who participated, as well as those in denominational organizations who assisted in finding these youth ministers.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Chapter 4 is an examination of the findings from data collected data through surveys. The researcher will also discuss the procedure by which information was gathered; tables are used to display results. The overall research design and method is analyzed, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses.

Compilation Protocol

Upon the approval of the research design and process, the researcher began making contacts with denominational figures who would have knowledge of youth ministers who have been in their positions for extended periods. A list of approximately twenty-nine names were compiled from these individuals. These names were kept in the order which they were received by the researcher.

The researcher then began to make calls to the potential survey candidates. Through this phone call the youth ministers were introduced to the researcher and then explained the nature of the research. The survey was also discussed, describing the areas in which it would focus, and the amount of time it would take to complete. Upon their willingness to complete the survey, the candidates were asked how they would like to receive the survey and based on their response the appropriate information was gathered.

Surveys were then sent out via electronic or regular mail. As surveys were returned, each one was examined for key words, phrases, and philosophies. Once the research sample met its minimum, the researcher began compiling responses to each question within the areas of focus.

The data was examined using measures of frequency which provide pertinent information into the results of the study. The mean provides the average tendency of given responses. The sum of the responses provides the total number of responses to survey questions within the range of the question itself.

Once these results were compiled, the researcher contacted three randomly selected youth ministers from the sample group. These three youth ministers were sent the results of the study and were asked to comment on the results. Their insights were then placed with their corresponding tables. The names of those youth ministers who completed the second part of the survey are represented as Wade, Kay, and Sam. Also, noteworthy is the fact that Kay was an intern for Wade when she began her career in youth ministry.

Findings and Displays

This section of the chapter will present the findings from the eighteen surveys received after meeting the study's delimitations. The researcher will organize the survey's responses according to how they were presented in the survey. There are five areas of focus: demographics, longevity, leadership technique, call to ministry, spiritual giftedness.

Demographics

Youth ministers surveyed were first asked to respond to a number of demographic questions (Table 1) which included their gender, age, number of years at their current church, the approximate size of their youth group, and location of their current church.

Table 1. Youth ministers with extended tenures

Gender	Age	Years at current church	Size of youth group	State
m	55	20	400	TX
f	44	29	175	TX
m	46	15	400	TX
m	44	15	275	TX
m	53	18	55	TX
m	47	18	52	TN
m	53	16	550	GA
m	52	14	550	FL
m	52	14	200	GA
m	53	20	200	TX
m	46	18	180	TX
f	50	16	120	VA
m	47	17	30	MO
m	42	12	250	SC
m	52	14	125	KY
m	52	23	10	WA
m	47	22	112	MO
m	46	13	250	LA
mean	48.9	17.4	218.5	

Of the eighteen responses, sixteen represent males and two were from females. The average age of this group is 48.9 years old. The average length of tenure for these youth ministers is 17.4 years at the same church as the primary minister for the youth and the youth program. Therefore, based on these averages, a youth minister would have been 31.5 years old when beginning their ministry at their current church.

The longest tenure represented is twenty-nine years while the shortest tenure of the group is twelve years. The average size of these groups is 218.5 students with the highest number of students in one group being 550 and the lowest being 10 students. These youth ministers represented churches from the following states: Texas, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Virginia, Missouri, South Carolina, Kentucky, Washington, Louisiana.

Insight into Youth Minister Demographics

The results of Table 1 compelled Sam to comment on the number of female youth ministers represented in the group: "I have always had a burden to see more female youth ministers." This desire stems from the effectiveness he sees in his female youth workers. He stated, "many of my best workers are women." Sam also observed that he felt like the male-to-female ratio in the survey was appropriate with what he has seen of youth ministers.

Sam was also impressed that the size of the youth group did not dictate tenure. One youth minister with a group of 10 students has been in his position for 23 years, while another youth minister who has been at his church for 14 years has a group of 550 students. Sam further remarked of his curiosity in wanting to know the size of each youth group when the tenure began. Having noticed he was the youngest person in the study,

Sam felt encouraged and hoped “to continue to serve, and the survey shows that is happening.”

Table 2. Seminary involvement

Seminaries attended	
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary	12
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary	2
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary	2
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	1
Seminaries degreed from	
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary	11
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary	2
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	1
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary	1
Degrees and course work	
Master of Divinity	4
Master of Divinity with Religious Education	1
Master of Arts in Religious/Christian Education	6
Master of Arts in Religious/Christian Education with a concentration in Youth Ministry	2

The youth ministers represent the following colleges and universities: Howard Payne University, Dallas Baptist University, Texas A&M, Wayland Baptist University, Appalachian State University, Mississippi College, Carson-Newman University, University of Central Florida, Texas Wesleyan University, Louisiana Tech, Francis Marion University, Michigan State University, Clemson University, Wake Forest

University, Oklahoma Baptist University, William Carey College, Mid-Continent College. Howard Payne University is the only school that was attended by more than one youth minister in the sample.

The researcher shows that 17 of the 18 surveyed had some seminary course work completed (Table 2). Of those that attended seminary, 12 (70.6%) of the youth ministers, attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2 (11.8%) attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2 (11.8%) attended Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and 1 (5.8%) attended The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

There were also a majority of the youth ministers surveyed who had completed seminary degrees (Table 2.1). Of the 18 youth ministers polled, 15 (83.3%) have graduate degrees. Eleven (73.3%) of the 15 graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2 (13.3%) hold degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1 (6.7%) holds a degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and 1 (6.7%) holds a degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Of the youth ministers who indicated course work and concentrations within their degrees, four youth ministers earned a Master of Divinity with an additional youth minister earning a Master of Divinity with a concentration in Religious Education. Six of the youth ministers surveyed earned a Master of Arts in Religious Education with an additional two youth ministers earning the same degree with a youth concentration. This concentration focused the degree primarily on youth ministry, whereas the degrees without this concentration gave a much broader area of study in the educational ministries of the church.

Insights into Educational Backgrounds

Upon seeing the results of Table 2, Wade commented that he was not surprised to see that Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was the most attended and had the most degrees represented in the study. This remark was based on his observation of Southwestern Seminary's "long time youth emphasis." Like other seminaries and universities that are known for their strength in certain areas, by observation, Southwestern Seminary has long been known for its support and commitment to youth ministry and those individuals called to youth ministry.

Kay commented that a "seminary and/or university with Youth Ministry in mind is helpful for being a Youth Minister." This emphasis may, in fact, assist in a youth minister's tenure. If a prospective youth minister attends a university or seminary that supports youth ministry as an area of focus for that institution, then the youth minister may be more prepared for what it takes to stay in youth ministry long term at one church.

Table 3. States of residence

Texas	7
Georgia	2
Missouri	2
Tennessee	1
Florida	1
Virginia	1
Washington	1
Kentucky	1
Louisiana	1
South	1

Of the youth ministers surveyed (Table 3), 7 (38.9%) are from Texas, 2 (11.1%) are from Georgia, 2 (11.1%) are from Missouri, and 1 (5.5%) youth minister resides in each of the following states: Tennessee, Florida, Virginia, Washington, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina.

State Support of Youth Ministry

Seeing Table 3 in relation to Table 2, Wade brought about a question regarding Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary being in the same state in which the majority of youth ministers continue in their tenure. "Is Texas more tenure friendly?" This can only be speculated. Texas has supported youth ministry and youth ministers for a considerable amount of time through state and associational organizations. Super Summer, an intense week of leadership and discipleship training for youth, has been ongoing in Texas for approximately twenty-five years. Other states, such as Tennessee, have seen the impact this week long program has had in the lives of the youth and their leaders and have implemented this program through their own state convention, modeling it after Texas' program and even using some of the same curriculum Texas uses.

Another youth program, Hot Hearts, is a regional event designed for youth evangelism. Hot Hearts events are organized throughout the state using local youth ministers to design and implement the program. Between eight hundred and two thousand participants are anticipated at each event.

The Texas Youth Minister's Conclave is also a way in which youth ministers in Texas have long been encouraged and equipped. Youth ministers from around the state are provided with several days of practical training and worship during this time. By

observation, the Texas Youth Minister's Conclave is an event that youth ministers plan to attend early in advance and schedule other ministry events around this important time of support and encouragement.

Longevity

Youth ministers were asked to comment on their longevity and the factor(s) that have led to an extended tenure for them (Table 4). Forty-three responses were compiled with 12 (27.9%) of the responses indicating that God's call to (specifically) youth ministry has led to their longevity.

Table 4. To what do you attribute your longevity in youth ministry?

God's call to youth ministry	12
Great church	5
Delegating responsibility/ministry team	3
Love for youth/seeing Christ impact them	3
Family support	3
Supportive pastor	3
Personal relationship with God	2
Staying fresh and creative	2
Sensitive to God's leadership and vision	2
Prayer	2
Passion/commitment for students	2
Established an intentional ministry to youth	1
Character and integrity	1
Lot of energy	1
Trained to stay	1
Sum of responses	43

Five responses (11.6%) attributed their current church as a factor, 3 (7.1%) attributed each of the following factors: delegating responsibility/ministry team, love for youth/seeing Christ impact their lives, family support, supportive pastor. Two (4.7%) of the responses attributed the following factors: personal relationship with God, staying fresh and creative, sensitive to God's leadership and vision, prayer, passion/commitment for students. Finally, 1 (2.3%) of the responses attributed longevity in each of the following: established an intentional ministry to youth, character and integrity, (having a lot of energy, trained to stay (by a seminary professor).

Factors Leading to Longevity

Kay stated that she agreed "with all of the answers" in Table 4. Sam remarked that he was "not very surprised" in seeing the results of the Longevity Table; it seemed obvious to him that calling translated into tenure. A youth minister's resolve in remaining in a position of ministry is directly associated to the individual's understanding of their call. If one is unsure of their call, it is conceivable that they may not be prepared to deal with the many influences and challenges that will inevitably come.

Wade made the observation that God's call to youth ministry, a great church, delegating responsibility/ministry team, love for youth/seeing Christ impact their lives, family support, and supportive pastor contain "both practical and spiritual reasons." This insight of balancing important areas of ministry is also found in Table 5 and Table 6. The knowledge and practice of offsetting priorities in ministry can be influential in a youth minister's longevity.

Kay further inquired about the marital status and family situations of those participating in the study, specifically, their “length of marriage or if any youth ministers are single. Also, how many of them have children in or that have gone through their ministry.” Kay explained that her 20-year-old daughter and her twenty-nine-year-old sister both went through her ministry while she was on staff at her current church. In fact, 7.1% of the responses given by those surveyed attributed family support as reason for their longevity.

When asked about how the reality of longevity in youth ministry can be achieved the sample gave 44 responses (Table 5). Ten (22.7%) of the total responses attributed obedience to God and sense of calling as the number one factor. Six responses (13.6%) indicated building the ministry team and delegation as factors. Three responses (6.8%) attributed each of the following: effectiveness in ministry, real joy and contentment, staying current in youth ministry. Two responses (4.5%) attributed each of the following: commitment to youth and youth workers, investing in the lives of others, longevity modeled by (their) youth minister, balancing priorities, personal growth in Christ, having a clear vision and mission. Finally, 1 response (2.3% of the total) was given to each of the following: agree with the pastor’s philosophy, establish and maintain a stable program, integrity and patience, prayer, “don’t plan your entire career,” love all the people all the time, stay humble before God.

Table 5. How can the reality of longevity in youth ministry be achieved?

Obedience to God/sense of calling	10
Building ministry team/delegation	6
Effectiveness in ministry	3
Real joy/contentment	3
Staying current in youth ministry	3
Commitment to youth and youth workers	2
Investing in the lives of others	2
Longevity modeled by youth minister	2
Balancing priorities	2
Personal growth in Christ	2
Having a clear vision and mission	2
Agree with senior pastor's philosophy	1
Establish/maintain a stable program	1
Integrity and patience	1
Prayer	1
Don't plan your entire "career"	1
Love all the people all the time	1
Stay humble before God	1
Total responses	44

Achieving Longevity in Youth Ministry

“Of course, God’s call would be number one on the next table,” Sam noted regarding Table 5. This, too, seemed to be somewhat obvious among responses given by youth ministers surveyed. Wade remarked that while prayer was lower on the list of factors that can lead to the reality of longevity in youth ministry that obedience to God/sense of calling “probably indicates prayer as well.”

Kay added that the support of family was very helpful. She also remarked that the attributes listed in Table 5 are important, but “communicating, reliability, organizational skills, humble heart towards others, and servant spirit are needed factors, too.” The question, while seemingly basic as posed in the survey, was actually complex in response as observed by the number of replies given by the youth ministers.

Table 6. What do you feel should be taught at the university and seminary level regarding longevity?

Genuine calling to youth ministry/not a stepping stone	6
Use tenured youth ministers to guest teach	4
Practical topics/courses	4
Delegation	2
Building and maintaining a strong leadership team	2
Continued personal and spiritual growth	1
Communication	1
Leadership skills	1
Ministry is not about the individual	1
Worship as lifestyle	1
It is possible to age with youth ministry	1
Staying in a constant state of evaluation	1
Experiencing success through longevity in youth	1
Money management	1
Staff relationships	1
Total responses	28

Youth ministers were surveyed as to what topic(s), based on their expertise, should be taught at the university and seminary level regarding youth ministry (Table 6).

The question yielded a total of 28 responses with 6 (21.4%) of those suggesting a genuine calling to youth ministry and not using youth ministry as a stepping stone should be taught. Four (14.2%) responses suggested using youth ministers with extended tenures to guest teach. Another 4 (14.2%) suggested practical topics would be beneficial. Two (4.5%) each suggested delegation should be taught, as well as building and maintaining a strong leadership team. Finally, 1 (2.2%) suggestion of each of the following was proposed: continued personal and spiritual growth, communication, leadership skills, ministry (is not about the individual), worship as a lifestyle, aging with youth ministry, staying in a constant state of evaluation, experiencing success through longevity (in youth ministry), money management, staff relationships.

Education at the University and Seminary Level

Wade commented that the genuine calling to youth ministry/not a stepping stone, using tenured youth ministers to guest teach, and practical topics/courses as what should be taught at the university and seminary level were all “good stuff.” He remarked further that he thought continued personal and spiritual growth would have been higher on the list of those areas of instruction.

Sam indicated that Table 6 contained a “very good list of things that need to be taught at seminary.” He further commented and encouraged that the list be passed on to those who teach at seminary and that it “would really be helpful” to those going into ministry and attending seminary.

Some seminaries may, in fact, include some of these important topics in the course work of those going into youth ministry. The implication would then become

whether or not youth ministers out of seminary are actually putting into practice what they are being taught in the classroom.

Kay noted that she sees “guys and gals participate in seminary and get so consumed with the book work that they neglect the “hands on” training. It is important for youth pastors to give teens and college students the opportunity to get their feet wet and discover the joy of ministering to others.” She further stated that more “hands on” time should be required of seminary students rather than just observing and/or doing a particular event. “I feel like a minimum of three months working at a church should be required for credit. During the three months, the student should interview the janitor, secretaries, childcare workers, and other staff as well.”

Finally, Kay stated that the idea of veteran youth ministers being utilized in the classroom and conferences would be a great idea and that there is a definite and immediate need for this. “Just this morning I received a call from a pastor from another church asking me to visit with a young youth minister.” Kay conveyed that even the most tenured youth minister does not have all the answers, rather they have battle wounds and victory medals that have been achieved and these youth ministers would welcome the opportunity to help others in youth ministry.

The population sample was asked what was their greatest joy(s) from having an extended tenure (Table 7). Of 43 total responses, 10 (23.3%) of those stated that seeing students grow into adults was the foremost greatest joy. Nine (20.9%) responses indicated that seeing students become part of the ministry team was one of their joys. Eight (18.6%) of the responses indicated seeing students called to ministry.

Table 7. What is your greatest joy from having an extended tenure?

Seeing students grow into adults	10
Watching former students become part of the ministry	9
Seeing students called to ministry	8
Perform weddings of former students	4
Birth of children of former students children	4
Seeing Christ impact students lives	3
Church members view you in more of a pastoral role	1
Observing peer ministry among students	1
Developing an effective leadership team	1
Former students become close friends	1
Children of former students enter youth group	1
Total responses	43

Four (9.3%) responses each were given to performing weddings of former students and the birth of children of former students. Three (7%) of the responses indicated seeing Christ impact students lives. One (2.3%) response was given for each of the following: church members view you in more of a pastoral role, observing peer ministry among students, developing an effective leadership team, former students become close friends (of the youth minister), children of former youth ministers enter youth group.

Leadership Techniques

The sample population of youth ministers were asked about key elements of leadership based on their expertise. Fifty-four responses were compiled (Table 8); 11

(20.4%) of those identified team building as the most important element in leadership. Seven responses (13%) indicated shared and casting vision as the second most frequent element. Six responses (11.1%) each named modeling servanthood/leading by example and shared responsibility/delegation. Four responses (7.4%) indicated providing resources and training. Three responses (5.6%) gave always learning and effective communication as elements of leadership. Two responses each (3.7%) indicated a healthy spiritual walk, integrity, and (leadership) begins with God.. Finally, 1 response each (1.9%) was indicated by the following: administration, recruit with job descriptions, compassion, understanding and giving grace, flexibility, observing, being selective in recruiting leaders, healthy family relationships.

Key Elements of Leadership

Table 8 gives a clear picture of how important team building is, according to Sam. The youth minister leads and does so through his team. This philosophy is affirmed as evidenced in Table 9 and Table 10. It should also be noted that the responses of shared vision, shared responsibility/delegation, and provide resources and training could be compiled in the team building response, however, because the youth ministers used specific terms the researcher felt it necessary to present the responses as conveyed by the youth ministers.

Wade, likewise affirmed that the majority of the youth ministers surveyed had a better understanding of the greater picture that was before them and acknowledged doing ministry solely for God's glory. Team building and shared vision/casting vision indicate the youth minister is "not building ministry around themselves."

Table 8. Based on your expertise, what are some key elements of leadership?

Team building	11
Shared vision/casting vision	7
Model servanthood/lead by example	6
Shared responsibility/delegation	6
Provide resources and training	4
Always learning	3
Effective communication	3
Healthy spiritual walk	2
Integrity	2
Begins with God	2
Administration	1
Recruit with job descriptions	1
Compassion	1
Understanding and giving grace	1
Flexibility	1
Observing	1
Be selective in recruiting leaders	1
Healthy family relationships	1
Total responses	54

The youth minister understands his role as the leader of that area of ministry and the responsibilities that go along with it; however, influencing others is the method by which leadership is achieved. Wade continued by remarking that this approach to leadership is in “direct contrast to the normal “pastor” type leadership model” wherein the leadership figurehead is much more prominent and those under this leader have less responsibility and power to use their abilities and gifts.

Twenty-five responses were compiled (Table 9) regarding how the youth minister perceived their personal leadership style. Five responses (20%) each were attributed to having a team approach and being an equipper/empowering others. Four responses (16%) indicate the youth ministers view themselves as a coach. Three responses (12%) stated shared responsibility. Two responses (8%) were attributed to each of the following: involved/participant, modeling, (being) laid back. One response each (4%) was indicated for servant and visionary. It is noted that a number of the population sample described their leadership style using more than one definite style or term; however, no terms were duplicated within one response.

Leadership Style and Longevity

Sam restated that, “Table 9 supports the concept of team leadership and the importance of equipping and involving others to fulfill their roles in ministry. It appears the recurrence of this concept gives value and weight to this approach to leadership.” He went further to say, “I am a firm believer in building a ministry team. I think that is really why I am still in youth ministry.”

Wade observed that “Table 9 supports the observation made of Table 8.” He went further to say that, “the team approach/equipper/coach style of leadership allows the minister the freedom to remain at his church longer. This would allow the youth minister to focus on his areas of passion and strength, thereby, leading to job satisfaction and possibly effectiveness.”

Table 9. What do you see as your personal leadership style?

Team approach	5
Equipper/empower others	5
Youth minister as coach	4
Shared responsibility	3
Involved/participant	2
Modeling	2
Laid back	2
Servant	1
Visionary	1
Total responses	25

As noted in the remarks of Table 8, some of the responses, such as coach and equipper, displayed in Table 9 could be compiled, but because the youth ministers used specific terms in describing their leadership styles the researcher chose to keep those terms as they were received. While these terms may hold some similarities, further differentiation between these terms will be explored through pertinent literature in Chapter 5.

Table 10. In your opinion, has your leadership style contributed to your longevity in ministry?

Yes	14
Probably/don't know	4
Total responses	18

In inquiring about whether leadership style has contributed to longevity, 18 total responses were compiled (Table 10) with 14 (77.8%) of the responses indicating leadership style has contributed to longevity. Four responses (22.2%) conveyed the youth minister did not know if, in fact, their leadership style has been a factor in their longevity.

Longevity Influenced by Leadership Style

Sam simply observed that a youth minister's leadership style is directly related to the tenure of that youth minister. How a youth minister understands and lives out their understanding of effective leadership is reflected in their tenure. This makes tenure and leadership style distinctly linked.

Table 11. Describe your youth ministry team and its function

Volunteers	16
Paid staff	7
Sunday school/Bible study	8
Wednesday night program	2
Discipleship	1
Parents/adults	12
Youth/leadership teams	8
College students	4
Older adults	2
Monthly	3
Weekly	3

Youth ministers were asked to describe their ministry team and its function (Table 11). Sixteen responded (88.9%) indicating that volunteers are used and 4 (38.9%) indicated having paid staff. It is also noted that some of those responding with using volunteers also indicated they have paid staff.

The capacities and responsibilities in which the ministry team is used ranged within Sunday School/Bible study teachers (8 responses), Wednesday night program (2), and discipleship (1).

The total sample population of 18 youth ministers indicated the make-up of these teams was as follows: parents/adults (12), youth/leadership teams (8), college students (4), older adults (2). Also indicated at this time was the frequency which some training took place with the ministry team. Three youth ministers indicated using monthly worker meetings and 3 youth ministers indicated using weekly meetings.

Effective Youth Ministry Teams

Wade noted from Table 11 that it “shows Sunday School is still a priority among these churches, and that involving parents in your ministry is a must!” The team is effectively made up of a variety of individuals who share the same passion and burden for students. This common interest and passion for youth ministry gives the team a bond and interest from which they can build relationships with each other, further strengthening the ministry team.

Sam remarked matter-of-factly, “I have the best volunteer team.” Many youth ministers may feel the same way, but this is noteworthy in Sam’s case because his group

is approximately 250 students and his youth ministry team is made up entirely of volunteers.

Table 12. Are there ways in which you train and develop your youth ministry team?

Retreats and conferences	8
Weekly meetings	6
Monthly meetings	4
State/regional	4
One-on-one training	3
Annual "tune-up"	2
Total responses	27

Twenty-seven responses were received conveying the ways in which youth ministers train and develop their ministry team (Table 12). Eight of those responses (29.6%) indicate using retreats and conferences. Six responses (22.2%) indicate utilizing weekly meetings. Four responses (14.8%) each indicate using monthly meetings and state/regional conferences. Three responses (11.1%) conveyed one-on-one training and two responses (7.4%) suggested annual "tune-ups".

Training Youth Ministry Teams

The table supports once more the concept that the youth minister is an involved member of the team and not merely someone who commands from a distance. It also shows the importance of equipping and training your team from those with extended

tenures. In building the youth ministry team, Wade remarked that retreats and conferences, weekly meetings, and monthly meetings “still reflect hands-on involvement with your team.” This involvement and encouragement by the youth minister conveys to the individuals on the team that they are important and worth whatever it takes to see them reach their potential in youth ministry. It also conveys to the team that their leader sees himself as a learner and student as well.

Table 13. How do you develop student leaders in your group?

Equip and give opportunity to serve	12
Encourage and mentor	6
Work with them	5
Meet monthly for planning and	4
Identify strengths and weaknesses	2
Use students in supportive roles	1
Local/state/national conferences	1
Total responses	31

The youth ministers surveyed responded with 31 ways in which they develop student leaders in their group (Table 12). Twelve of those responses (38.7%) say students are equipped and given the opportunity to serve. Six responses (19.4%) said they encourage and mentor students. Five responses (16.1%) indicate that the youth ministers “work with” students. Four responses (12.9%) indicate meeting monthly for planning and training. Two responses (6.5%) said strengths and weaknesses of students were identified.

Finally, 1 response each (3.2%) indicated using students in supportive roles and participating in local/state/national conferences.

Developing Student Leaders

Wade stated that Table 13 “supports the latest research concerning students search for meaning in their life.” Experienced youth ministers are giving students the opportunities to serve and explore the meaning and purpose of their lives. He went on to say that in this stage of a student’s development, encouragement and service opportunities go hand in hand. While the youth minister is continually pouring his life and investing in the group at large, there are those student leaders that get more individualized attention through mentoring by the youth minister.

Call to Ministry

The population, 18 youth ministers, were asked to describe their call to ministry (Table 14). Seven of those (38.9%) indicated they were in college at the time of their call while 3 (16.7%) of the youth ministers indicated high school being the time they were called to ministry.

Two responses (11.1%) each indicate middle school and while serving as an adult volunteer as the time they were called. Finally, 1 response (5.5%) indicates being a PK, or preacher’s kid. To the same question, 8 responses (44.4%) say they were serving in ministry when they understood the call to ministry. Three responses (16.7%) indicate it was through the church that the call was understood.

Two responses (11.1%) articulate a call while attending a conference/retreat. Finally, 1 response (5.5%) is indicated in each of the following: prayer/meditation, talked

with a youth minister friend, desire to work with youth, initially tried to run from the call to ministry.

Table 14. Describe your call to ministry

While in college	7
While in middle school	3
While in high school	2
While an adult volunteer	2
Grew up a PK	1
Serving in ministry	8
Through the church	3
While attending a conference/retreat	2
Prayer meditation	1
Talked with a youth minister friend	1
Desire to work with youth	1
Tried to run from call to ministry	1

The Call to Ministry

Wade observed and noted the wide range of responses given and that it was an interesting array. He commented further saying that within the responses there is a great possibility of ministry to college students. “We put a lot of church money into ministries, to junior high and senior high, but almost no funding for college ministry, much less for specialized ministerial staff.”

Kay explained that teens need help in understanding God’s call in their life.

“We need them to grasp the concept that they can minister to others without having to be the youth minister.” She remarked further that although students need to be equipped and empowered to do ministry, there is still a need for “guys and gals to be called into the ministry.” There remains this great balance between those who are called into vocational ministry and those who are called to live their lives in service to God. These students who feel God is calling them into vocational ministry need to be prepared, equipped, and “youth ministry needs to be promoted as a life long opportunity.”

Table 15. How did you know you were specifically called to youth ministry?

Love/burdened for youth	10
Got involved in youth ministry	3
Being sensitive to opportunities	2
Prayer	1
Daily sense of calling	1
Influenced by youth minister	1
Total responses	18

When surveyed as to how the youth ministers knew they were called specifically to youth ministry (Table 15), 18 responses were given with 10 of the responses (55.5%) conveying their love for and being burdened for youth. Three responses (16.7%) indicate being involved in youth ministry, 2 responses (11.1%) give being sensitive to opportunities (in youth ministry). Finally, 1 response (5.6%) each is

given to the following as to knowing how the minister was called specifically to youth ministry: prayer, daily (continued) sense of calling, influenced by a youth minister.

Called to Youth Ministry

Sam explained that there had been some staff changes at his church since he initially took the survey. As a staff member left and that position became vacant, “I was asked if I would be interested in his position.” At this point Sam had to reevaluate his call to ministry, specifically youth ministry, and discern if he thought God could be moving him to another area of ministry. He was reaffirmed in his calling to youth ministry and stated, “I can honestly say that I look forward to serving in youth ministry for years to come.”

Table 16. How was your call affirmed?

Through church members	6
Effectiveness in youth group	5
Peace from God	4
Through serving	3
Guidance from the Holy	1
By youth minister	1
By pastor	1
Received call from a church	1
Affirmed daily	1
Total responses	23

The population gave 23 responses when asked how their call was affirmed (Table 16). Six of those responses (26%) indicate their call was affirmed through members of their church. Five responses (21.7%) show that their call was affirmed through effectiveness in the youth group where they were involved. Four responses (17.4%) say peace from God was their affirmation. Three responses (13.1%) from youth ministers received affirmation through serving and 1 response (4.3%) from each of the following: guidance from the Holy Spirit, by youth minister, by pastor, received a call (to serve) from a church, affirmed daily.

Affirming the Call to Youth Ministry

Upon reviewing the ways in which these youth minister's call to ministry was affirmed, Wade commented that the second most frequent response, effectiveness in youth group, "is a dangerous way to measure one's call."

When asked to comment on the common misconception regarding youth ministry (Table 17), 21 responses were given with 4 responses (14.3%) each for the following: youth ministry is not "real" ministry; youth ministry is a stepping stone; ministry is not hard work; only ministers are called to do ministry. Two responses (9.5%) each were given for surrendering to the ministry means giving up so much and people cannot mislead one into ministry. Finally, 1 response (4.8%) each was given for the following misconceptions regarding the call to ministry: that (the call) is a one-time event, students should get all one's time, (the call) is something mysterious, (the call) is a "feeling," God will not call one to a smaller church.

Table 17. What do you feel is a common misconception regarding the call to ministry?

Youth ministry isn't "real" ministry	3
Youth ministry is a stepping stone	3
Ministry isn't hard work	3
Only ministers are called to do ministry	3
Surrendering to ministry means giving up so	2
People can't mislead you into ministry	2
That (the call) is a one time event	1
Students should get all your time	1
(the call) Is something "mysterious"	1
(the call) Is a "feeling"	1
God will not call you to a smaller church	1
Total responses	21

Spiritual Giftedness

The youth ministers were surveyed as to their primary spiritual gifts, 15 responded by ranking their gifts. Six of those responses (40%) indicated government/leadership as their primary spiritual gift.

Table 18. Primary spiritual gifts indicated

Government/Leadership	6
Pastor/Shepherding	5
Exhortation	1
Ministering	1
Faith	1
Teaching	1

Five responses (33.3%) indicated pastor/shepherding. One response (6.7%) each was recorded for the following: exhortation, ministering, faith, teaching. The researcher also noted the following spiritual gifts that were indicated but not ranked by those youth ministers completing the survey: helps/ministering, showing mercy, hospitality, prophecy, exhortation, evangelism, discernment.

Spiritual Gifts and the Youth Minister

It was noted by Wade that the two most frequent responses to the spiritual gifts of youth ministers, government/leadership and pastor/shepherding, are very domineering gifts. These are gifts that are not passive and idle but suggest movement and direction.

Table 19. How are your spiritual gifts affirmed in your ministry?

Use of spiritual gifts	12
Others who recognize them	5
Support of the church	2
Success/effectiveness	1
Inner peace	1
Encouragement from	1
Personal time with God	1
Personal desires fueled by God	1
Total responses	24

When asked how their spiritual gifts are affirmed in ministry (Table 19), 24 responses were given with 12 responses (50%) conveying that the youth ministers are affirmed in the use of their spiritual gifts. Five responses (20.8%) indicate affirmation

through others who (recognize their gifts); 2 responses (8.3%) showed affirmation through support of the church. Finally, 1 response (4.2%) each was attributed to the following ways of affirmation: success/effectiveness, inner peace, encouragement from pastor/staff, personal time with God, personal desires fueled by God.

Affirming Spiritual Gifts

Wade commented that he liked the fact that, not only did the youth ministers surveyed know their spiritual gifts, but that they are *using* them. Doing so places the youth minister in a position of being used more effectively. He went on to say that it seems as though we expect so much from church members that is outside their “gift” area.

Table 20. Have your spiritual gifts changed during your tenure in ministry?

No	11
Yes	2
Better at using gifts	5
Gifts matured	3

The youth ministers were asked if their spiritual gifts had changed during their tenure (Table 20); 11 of them indicated that their gifts had not changed with 2 indicating that their gifts had changed. Five youth ministers indicated that their gifts had not changed, but were utilizing them better. Three stated that they saw their gifts mature over time.

The Maturing of Spiritual Gifts

In reviewing Table 20 regarding whether or not the spiritual gifts of youth ministers with extended tenures have changed during their tenure, Wade commented that he was surprised at the results of 11 youth ministers surveyed who said their gift had not changed and 2 conveying some change in their spiritual gifts. "I thought that (number whose gifts had changed) would have been higher due to physical maturity and spiritual maturity." This comment by Wade is understood in several ways. First, as the youth minister matured, both physically and spiritually, what the individual perceived as a spiritual gift was perhaps an interest of the youth minister and not a gift. Secondly, what the youth minister perceived as one gift was, in fact, a different gift. For example, a youth minister who is just beginning in ministry may believe that he has the gift of leadership. Upon years of ministry, experience, and knowledge this same youth minister discovers that his giftedness is and has been in pastor/shepherding all along, he simply misinterpreted it earlier.

Wade completed his follow-up survey saying, "I think the survey shows that tenured youth ministers see themselves in servant leadership roles. It also shows that to stay for a lengthy tenure requires building a base of volunteer leadership with the support of parents."

Evaluation of the Research Design

After explaining the research process, the researcher will comment and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology in this section.

One of the strengths of this study is its focus on the person of the youth minister, in particular those with extended tenures. These youth ministers have been in their current positions long enough that they have literally seen it all in youth ministry. Fads, trends, heartaches, and celebrations are all part of their experiences and how they have handled and learned from each circumstance with its own uniqueness adds to their expertise. This study took the time and initiative to investigate the individual serving and leading youth ministry instead of focusing on another philosophy or approach to youth ministry.

Another strength of the study is in its survey. This instrument was designed with the youth minister in mind and how to best glean his or her expertise. The survey allowed the youth ministers to share their hearts, some other instruments of empirical analysis give only a few choices in which to articulate the subjects knowledge. The open-ended questions of this instrument allowed the individual to go beyond and perhaps deeper than what may have been possible in a standardized instrument. The survey was very direct and to-the-point which allowed the youth minister to quickly and efficiently convey his or her thoughts, yet also provided the environment for them to express as much of their thoughts as they desired.

The small sample number of the study also serves as one of its strengths. This allowed the researcher to deal with a small number of individuals and surveys rather than those studies which require several hundred individual surveys. This small number reinforced the personal feel of the study itself. The small population sample also gave quick results, showing immediate patterns and frequencies, particularly since the

researcher was looking for key words and phrases with which to measure frequency. This allowed the researcher to narrow the field and scope of the study.

The small population sample also allowed the researcher to personally contact and speak with each survey participant. This communication provided the participant and researcher the opportunity to better understand one another's motivation and passion for youth ministry.

One weakness of this study is in dealing with such an elite group of individuals, it became somewhat difficult to find youth ministers that fit the parameters of the research. To remove some personal bias, the researcher had to contact denominational leaders and those in positions who would most likely know of youth ministers with extended tenures. Once these individuals were contacted, the researcher had to wait for responses from many and in dealing with such a small population sample and elite group, each survey was critical to the study itself.

Another weakness of the study was in the assumption that individuals were able to retrieve an attached survey to an e-mail, complete and save it, then attach it to an e-mail and send it back to the researcher. With the stroke of a key e-mails get sent or deleted, even unintentionally. After some of the youth ministers completed the survey, they responded with an e-mail saying the survey was attached and yet it was not. The researcher contacted these individuals saying the e-mail was received but there was not an attachment to it. Most of the youth ministers again stated that it was sent correctly; however, the typical size of an e-mail received was 2K-3K in size whereas an e-mail with the completed survey attached was approximately 30K-50K in size. This indicated that the size of the e-mail was too small to have included the survey.

Also, a weakness of the survey is in the question of asking for youth ministers to identify their primary spiritual gift. While most of the youth ministers identified primary and secondary gifts as requested, some did not feel it was possible to pinpoint one primary gift and therefore marked multiple gifts without indicating a rank or order. If a youth minister indicated multiple gifts without placing them in order, the survey question was invalid for that individual and could not be placed within the scope of the intended results. Multiple gifts, however, were listed as other gifts indicated by youth ministers but without rank.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the proposed research and its findings are discussed in this chapter. The research's purpose is once again presented to reiterate the purpose and motivation of the study, as well as determining the relationship between the findings and the issue of longevity and leadership techniques in youth ministry. Based on the study, applications to ministry were then presented followed by possible areas of future research stemming from this research.

Research Purpose

This research investigated the factors leading to the longevity of youth ministers with extended tenure positions in relationship to organizational climate factors, leadership techniques, ministerial calling, and spiritual giftedness.

Research Implications

Research implications are presented as they apply to beliefs, theories, and practices. These implications will come to light through the precedent literature and the findings of the study. In this section the academics of the theory were merged with the actuality of what is being practiced in the arena of youth ministry.

The Harm in Short Tenures of Youth Ministers

There is great damage to students, families, youth programs and churches when youth ministers claim to be called to a particular position, then abruptly leave for another position after a brief time of service. This hardens the students' trust and openness with the next student minister. This important position of ministry and leadership also creates a void when the student minister leaves. It challenges other staff members to do damage control while handling their own responsibilities. Likewise, the parents of students are also hesitant to completely support and commit to a new youth pastor if they are still coping with last youth minister's departure

Common Demographic Characteristics

One implication about demographics is in regards to the age of the youth ministers. As stated in the chapter 4, the average age of this group of tenured youth ministers is 48.9 years old. The average length of tenure for these youth ministers is 17.4 years at the same church as the primary minister for the youth and the youth program. Therefore, based on these averages, a youth minister would have been 31.5 years old when starting ministry at their current church. Regarding longevity, the age of the youth minister at the start of their current ministry may play a significant role in their tenure. At thirty-one years old, the individual has been seasoned by maturity and life's experiences which may include experiences on a church staff and in youth ministry. Bringing all these to a new position would certainly make a longer tenure expected, more so than a youth minister straight out of seminary at his first church.

Steve observed the ratio of female youth ministers in the study and conveyed that he believed this would be a realistic ratio of male to female youth ministers in the ministry today. Of the 18 youth ministers surveyed, 16 are male and 2 are female; this gives an 8 to 1 ratio of male to female youth ministers in the population. This ratio may change depending upon location. This researcher would even approximate that the ratio would be even greater than 1 female youth minister for every 8 male youth ministers.

From casual observation, a youth minister from Texas who has been in Tennessee for eight years can vouch for the strength of youth ministry in Texas where 38.9% of the sample currently resides and serves in youth ministry. The network and comradery of youth ministers in Texas is strong and healthy. By observation, this same support is not to this degree in surrounding states. This level of support could be a factor in longevity.

This theory could be broadened even further as it would apply to a region of the country. Of the 18 youth ministers surveyed 13 are from the south. Based on casual observations, the south has had a consistent history of placing emphasis on youth ministry. This would support the large number of youth ministers in this study being from the southern states.

Sam again noted that the size of the youth groups in relation to tenure did not appear to be a factor. The sizes of youth groups ranged from 550 to 10, this represented the greatest range of difference between results. A case in point, the youth minister whose group is comprised of 10 students has been serving there for 23 years. While numbers are helpful in measuring certain types of effectiveness, they are not a reliable predictor of tenure.

Another implication out of this study is based on Table 2. It would seem rather obvious, but should still be noted, that students gravitate towards seminaries they believe will best fill their educational needs in their area of ministry. This is supported by the fact that 17 colleges and universities are represented in the total sample of 18 youth ministers. And yet, 12 of the 18 in the sample chose a common seminary a number of years ago. Today, it could only be speculated as to the ratio of incoming seminary students who would choose certain seminaries based on reputation. Colleges, universities, and seminaries have the option and challenge to pursue the program(s) it wants to emphasize and thereby attract students who are called to a specific area of ministry within those schools.

Longevity

The phenomenon of longevity in youth ministry is one that has been around and discussed for approximately twenty years or more. In the past, research has revolved around why youth ministers leave after only short periods of time. In comparison, little research has been conducted on why youth ministers remain in their positions for an extended time. Those ministers who have remained in their positions have reaped numerous benefits that would otherwise have been missed if they left prematurely. Seasoned youth ministers get to see visions and long term goals come to fruition after years of prayer and teamwork on behalf of students, parents, and youth workers. These youth ministers also get to witness students grow from middle school, to college, and even start their own families. Table 7 showed that some of these former students even come back and serve on the youth ministry team as well.

Youth ministers who remain in this area of ministry have the opportunity to become better and stronger within their field of expertise. “There is an advantage to accumulating years of experience as a youth minister. One can surmise that a youth minister learns something (maybe very much) at each place of service. We can also assume that the less able drop out of the profession, with the result that the fittest are the ones who survive” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn, 2001, 89). If one learns so much from simply remaining in the profession of youth ministry, then an individual has an even greater chance to learn from remaining in the same place of service.

To what do you attribute your longevity in youth ministry?

The implication for ministers to understand and embrace their call to ministry is imperative. In doing so, youth ministers will be better prepared to handle the urges to leave their positions of ministry during times of dissatisfaction, strife and conflict. “The call to youth ministry – its own journey of adventure, risk, and discovery – is likewise a calling unsuited to the faint of heart. And yet, despite the challenges, despite the likelihood of low honor and recognition, despite the small wages and occasional seasons of darkness and discouragement, we sign on, eager to see where God might lead us. And it’s an amazing adventure!” (Robbins 2005, 26). Understanding the call to ministry, specifically youth ministry, was repeatedly evident in those surveyed. Tables 4, 5, and 6 showed that understanding the call to ministry was foundational in their longevity and that other aspects of longevity were the over flow of this understanding (Table 4; Table 5; and Table 6). The comprehension of not only the call to ministry but to a place of ministry is beneficial when youth ministers are presented with opportunities to leave

their current positions of ministry for other positions offering larger salaries or positions which may be perceived as “promotions”. In some cases these moves are legitimate. God still calls youth ministers to other places and areas of ministry, but many times youth ministers leave prematurely for positions offering higher salaries, benefits, perceived prestige, etc. This study has shown that youth ministers with extended tenures overwhelmingly attribute their longevity to their call to ministry. Part of the implication in this is that youth ministers with long tenures understand their call better and more fully than those with patterns of short tenures. Their longevity allows them to reaffirm their call by seeing the rewards and goals come to fruition as they invest their lives in others. These youth ministers also seem to have the resolve about them that the only reason to leave is if God calls them to leave. There was a feel within their responses that they understood that God had not released them from their current position and until that happened they would gladly remain.

The results in this study support the important role the church plays in the youth ministers tenure. Several responses from returned surveys factor in their church as an influence in their longevity which makes going to the right church all the more important. “God did not designate by name every ministry in which the church was to engage herself. When specific and unique needs arose, men called of God would attempt to meet those needs. Just as God raises up individuals to specific tasks at certain periods of time, so also He raises individuals to minister to specific age groups” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 234-235). A clear understanding by a church for her needs, along with a minister who understands their calling to a particular age group has the potential for a long term relationship. The call to a church to serve it in ministry should be the result of a

mutual understanding of a specific person who is called to fill a specific need or desire of a church. Youth ministers need to realize that when a church comes to interview them as a potential staff member it is also the youth minister's opportunity to interview the church in order to help discern God's desire for them and their family. This interview should be seen as a two-way street in which both parties represented ask and answer important questions regarding the position they are wanting to fill and life as part of their church family.

One implication in understanding the call to ministry as it applies to longevity is for youth ministers to not only understand their call but also be resolved to put into practice this understanding and stay until that call changes. It was interesting in that understanding God's call to youth ministry seemed to be rather blatant, particularly when responses like "obvious" and "no surprises" are used in returned surveys. Youth ministers who may have the tendency of being short-term should be encouraged and determined to remain, even through conflict, until God moves them. Although understanding God's call seems to be obvious, the issue and importance of tenure in youth ministry still remains. Out of 43 responses from 18 youth ministers, only 1 mentioned being purposefully trained to stay years ago by a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The study also showed that tenured youth ministers place a high priority on their ministry teams. "Long-term growth of a youth ministry is directly dependent on the ability of the youth worker to release ministry responsibilities to mature and qualified lay workers" (Dunn and Senter 1997, 150). Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 all convey the concept of delegation and its relationship to longevity (Table 4; Table 5; Table 6; Table 7; and Table 8). Investing in others for the purpose of equipping and empowering them to share in the

responsibilities of ministry would help control burn-out among youth ministers.

Delegating some aspects of ministry keeps the youth minister from feeling like he has to do it all himself. This gives the youth minister more time to see more of the real joy and contentment in his vocation along with time to stay current with the ever changing trends in youth ministry, which allows him to better prepare and equip the ministry team. It also implies that with these crucial teams in place the youth minister can focus on his areas of giftedness and passions within youth ministry.

Modeling longevity shows youth ministry students what it looks like and affirms the concept to them that longevity is attainable. Upon getting to a church as the new staff member, the new youth minister should begin to imagine and think about what it will be like to see students enter and graduate from high school, college, get married and start families of their own. Youth ministers should also take the time to think about investing in some students for when they become adults and part of the youth ministry team.

A final implication in regards to longevity is the new role and perception a youth minister with an extended tenure receives from parents, students, and the church as a whole. Many short term youth ministers are frustrated because they do not feel as though they are receiving the respect due them, and yet this respect and trust can only be developed over time. "People respect and trust a person who loves them. Only over time can love be authenticated" (Anderson 1986, 77). Over time, with maturity and experience, a youth minister can be viewed of in more of a pastoral role.

Youth ministers surveyed also conveyed the sensitivity to God's leadership and vision as influential in their longevity. The ability to understand this is powerful in the

hands of those who know how to use it wisely and for God's glory. Remaining true to the vision and obedient to God's calling are paramount when discussing longevity.

To have vision is to have power. To have a vision is to be powerful. To have a vision that is of God is to lead with power. Martin Luther, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Jr., each had a vision. For Luther it was of a church that does not sell Jesus but shares Jesus. For Mother Teresa it was a vision of God who calls God's people to care for the outcasts. For Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it was a dream of a common humanity rooted in mutual respect. Their visions have moved nations, institutions, and millions of people. Importantly, none of these people held political office, commanded armies, or possessed great wealth. Yet their accomplishments have reshaped the world. Vision is that powerful and that important. (Hill, ed. 1999, 18)

How can the reality of longevity in youth ministry be achieved?

Over half of the youth ministers surveyed articulated the idea that if an individual is to strive for and achieve longevity in ministry then that individual must have a strong sense of calling in obedience to God. This calling is not the result of the inability to do anything else but the response of the prodding of the Holy Spirit. "Sometimes it cajoles us; sometimes it prods us; sometimes it reassures us; sometimes it pesters us – this intangible, inexplicable sense that God is calling us into pastoral work and a growing sense of holy discontent with anything other than the pastoral vocation. In fact, Charles Spurgeon, who saw this holy discontent as an important sign of a pastoral calling, encouraged his students not to pursue ministry if they felt they could be content doing anything else" (Robbins 2005, 27). Without this sense of God's calling and being obedient to his leadership an individual is more likely to operate under their own desires and understanding of what ministry should be. By observation, one who is called into

ministry and does not follow it will not be fulfilled in their occupation. A void would remain that could only be filled by God's desire.

Again, the concept of delegation and ministry teams is ranked high by youth ministers with longevity. This empowering and equipping of others is credited as something one would need to do if longevity is to be achieved. These teams have the unique tasks of using their collective gifts and working as a team to accomplish a common purpose. Richard Ross also designates some of these teams as Lead Teams. This concept is "the formation of teams of youth and lay adults whose task is to assume responsibility for activities Ross had traditionally handled. Each Lead Team assumed ultimate responsibility for an event – a mission trip, weekend retreat, family festival, or vacation Bible school. The Lead Team functioned only as long as it was needed to prepare for and carry out the designated project" (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 52). Youth and adults who made up these Lead Teams were eligible to serve on other Lead Teams, however, the make up of the teams may not consist of the same individuals.

Effectiveness in ministry, as noted by Wade in chapter 4, can be misleading in comprehending effectiveness, and yet, the expertise of long-term youth ministers convey that it is a factor in achieving longevity. A youth minister who measures effectiveness both internally and externally will have a more precise grasp of effectiveness. "Internally, tenure and age (but especially tenure) make an enormous difference in how youth ministers feel about themselves. The longer one serves as youth minister, the higher one scores on measures of competent job performance, confident leadership, effective relationships with youth, theological grounding, achievement in developing adult volunteers being motivated by God's calling, ability to relate to parents, and making a

creative response to the youth culture. Tenure is an important contributor to how a youth minister evaluates self” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 88). Therefore, the longer one remains in youth ministry the better one is able to self evaluate in terms of effectiveness.

Externally measuring effectiveness does not simply mean large crowds.

Churches and individuals “can draw large crowds and win the accolades of onlookers and participants alike. But to be authentic ministry, young people must be continuously and intentionally drawn closer to Jesus Christ. If this isn’t happening, then it may be a youth group, but it isn’t youth ministry” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 204).

Surveyed youth ministers also articulated the need for real joy and contentment while serving in ministry. This joy has its foundation in the believer’s relationship with God through Jesus. It cannot be manufactured and there is no substitute for it. This joy is “Christians abiding in their relationship with the Father by reaching up and with one another reaching out, loving God and loving others. We need both to keep our spiritual well from running dry. Remember, you can’t give what you don’t possess” (Patty 2005, 288). This joy is unfailing and has the power to allow the youth minister to see beyond current circumstances which may be less than appealing and even discouraging.

In continuing with what youth ministers need in order to achieve longevity, staying current in the area of youth ministry was one of the factors long-term youth ministers stated as being important. One of the dangers and pitfalls in youth ministry is when a youth minister becomes complacent or comfortable in regards to methodology. “One of the difficulties is trying to understand a changing population. Even the most seasoned youth leaders are at a loss to explain the why of student behavior – both positive and negative. The rapidity of social change, the diversity of contemporary culture, and the

complexity of students' lives suggest that what worked before may not be the most effective approach now" (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 100). Several of the youth ministers surveyed recognized the importance of staying current in the field of youth ministry, which includes youth culture as a whole. Not staying current, by education, observation, and awareness, a youth minister may find themselves unable to relate to some of the struggles that current society puts before the students in the youth group and those students who visit youth group activities.

The ongoing intimate relationship a youth minister has with Christ cannot be substituted for any youth activity or event if the youth minister is seeking to achieve longevity according to youth ministers who have already achieved longevity.

Private worship cannot be replaced by a busy work schedule. This may seem obvious, but much of the work of youth ministry appears to be so spiritual that there seems to be no need for additional moments of worship. Visiting people in the hospital, counseling with teenagers and their families, telling people about Christ, and leading public worship would appear to be enough to fill any need for private times alone with God. These actions, no matter how holy and blessed, do not suffice for the quiet moments of worship and reflection with the Master. (Black 1991, 170)

There simply cannot be enough written and encouraged regarding this aspect of the life of the youth minister. The spiritual life of the believer has been paralleled to that of an endurance athlete and the one called to youth ministry is no exception. Aging in youth ministry along with growing in Christ has infinite benefits. "Unlike athletic strength that diminishes with age, spiritual depth and maturity increases with greater life experience. Longevity in youth ministry is not only possible, but also needed. Just as an athlete stays in shape through a regimen of exercise and diet, a youth minister practices disciplines for the long haul" (Patty 2005, 296). Of these disciplines, prayer was a recurring theme for those youth ministers surveyed. The idea of trying to plan and

implement everything from an event to an entire youth program without prayer is a foreign concept to those who have achieved longevity. “Tending our own spiritual disciplines is the first great practice of those who run with endurance. As we grow in Christ, we must develop our appetite for more of him and more of his Word. We must continually go deeper spiritually, not only work harder” (Patty 2005, 301).

Having a clear vision and mission will inspire and evoke the creativity within the leader that God wants to work through in order to achieve his purpose. “A good vision will burrow into the mind and capture the imagination. A compelling vision is vivid, inspiring, and succinct” (Patty 2005, 18). Youth ministers with longevity have tied their longevity to this understanding of vision and the ability in which to see it achieved. Longevity is more likely when vision is understood by the youth minister.

What do you feel should be taught at the university and seminary level regarding longevity?

The idea that youth ministry is a stepping stone in the process of moving up the ministry ladder was spoken against by the youth ministers surveyed and particularly regarding what they felt should be taught at the seminary and/or university level.

It is often said that, in ministry, all one has to hang onto in times of difficulty is the assurance of God’s call. This call of God and the desire to minister with youth is strongly evident in the lives of youth ministers. Inversely related to this sense of calling is the belief that youth ministry is merely a stop on the way to a more important or prestigious position. Overwhelmingly, youth ministers reject the idea that their vocation is a stepping stone, a place to serve while they wait for the pastorate. This is encouraging news, that men and women who serve a full-time professional youth ministers throughout these various denominations and ministries view themselves as called by God to minister with youth- for life. (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 214)

A certain amount of empowerment is given to those who feel called into youth ministry when they understand that their call to youth ministry may be a lifetime call. This understanding could help take away some of the pressure and anxiety of an individual who feels like they need to be looking for the next level in ministry.

Using long-term youth ministers to guest teach was suggested by some of the surveyed youth ministers. These participants recognized the value of one generation of youth minister imparting their knowledge and experience to a newer generation of youth minister. "Older youth ministers provide an untapped treasure of experiences and wisdom. This body of knowledge about youth ministry could be a valuable asset to those who are younger or less experienced in youth ministry" (Black 1991, 185). Dr. Wes Black of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary affirmed this idea fourteen years ago as he wrote, "I still sense these feelings in younger youth ministers across the country and the students I teach in seminary. They are eager to sit with older youth ministers and gain from their knowledge and experience. Older youth ministers also desire ways to share their lives and experiences with younger youth ministers" (Black 1991, 186). Even through this study, youth ministers surveyed articulated the need and desire to share their knowledge. Some of the participants went further and conveyed that they had been contacted specifically by a younger youth minister inquiring about the possibility of meeting regularly with the long-term youth minister in order to learn more about this area of ministry. Part of this could be accomplished by using long-term youth ministers as guest lecturers during the course of a program. Students would get to see and hear firsthand what some of these icons in youth ministry are about. Students need to hear from a youth minister who has ten students in his group yet has been at his church for

twenty-three years. They also need to hear how a youth minister with a 250- student youth group manages and leads it through an all adult ministry team. Utilizing long- term youth ministers as guest lecturers may also open the door for continued student contact with the youth minister after the class is over and even after completing the program itself.

Delegation of responsibility also surfaced regarding suggested topics for seminary and university students. Those surveyed recognized this as a skill that needs to be not only taught, but developed. "Delegation is another essential ministry skill that must be developed if youth ministers are to experience continued satisfaction from their work. Even those skilled in leadership often find it hard to delegate" (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 206). Delegating responsibility to individuals and ministry teams is a recurring theme as it is represented in Tables 4 through Table 9. Longevity and leadership are directly related to delegation as conveyed by youth ministers with extended tenures.

Through the previous survey question, the youth minister's personal relationship with Christ was shown to be a priority. Youth ministers surveyed went further to say that it is also something that needs to be taught and impressed upon those in seminaries and universities. This study is not trying to convey the idea that the importance of one's personal walk with Christ is not being taught at these institutions, rather the study is seeking to convey what long term youth ministers are experiencing within the contexts of their observations and experiences. "It is clear that your relationship with God in Christ affects your relationships" (Patty 2005, 288). The youth minister is challenged to continue for themselves a pattern of personal and spiritual growth. The minister owes it to themselves and to those they minister to take the

necessary and appropriate time to grow. “In our ministries it’s not about putting our shoulders to the wheel and going at it as hard as we can for as long as we can. We need to take time out for sharpening ourselves. Lifers find ways to regularly sharpen the saw.” (Patty 2005, 303-304). This important time not only serves the minister will but also those to whom he ministers.

What is your greatest joy from having an extended tenure?

Hindsight and taking the time reflect on years in ministry can be an effective way to be encouraged and affirmed. Youth ministers who were surveyed conveyed this idea as they responded to the joy from having an extended tenure. Overwhelmingly, the greatest joy conveyed was seeing students grow up and having some of those join the ministry team. These youth ministers also noted the immense joy they had as they were asked to officiate at some of their former students weddings and to be around as some of their former students become parents. “There are the added privileges of administering the sacraments and officiating at weddings and funerals. Which probably doesn’t sound like big fun. But, in fact, for many in pastoral ministry, officiating and sharing in these significant lifetime landmarks is one of the highest privileges of ordained ministry. To be present in these intensely vivid and defining moments is to find oneself on stage and playing a pivotal role in real-life human dramas” (Robbins 2005, 30). Short term youth ministers miss the joy of seeing the youth that they watched enter the youth group graduate from high school, college, and life’s other milestones.

Another joy that youth ministers noted was in developing a leadership team. This team is where the youth minister invests time and energy in order to more effectively

fulfill the team's purpose. The effectiveness of this team and the responsibility it bears is crucial. While the team is designed to complete certain tasks, some of these teams are designed for the sole purpose of connecting with students and building relationships with them, this in turn makes the students more effective and purposeful as they live out their faith. "Students who were effective in evangelism were the ones who met regularly with adults. Those who reported having no impact on their friends coming to Christ were the ones who did not meet with an adult" (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 139).

Leadership Techniques

Leadership is about influencing others, specifically what it is to "get things done through other people" (Stanley 2003, 23). An effective youth minister leads through a team. In order to accomplish this the leader must have a direction and know where he is taking the team. "Leaders must know where they're going if they expect others to willingly join them on the journey" (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 23). There should be movement from the team in the direction of where the youth minister sees them going. This position of being the leader of the team, however, does not mean the leader is not numbered with the team. The youth minister acknowledges and shows that he is also one of the team. "Leadership is a calling, a vocation, not a position. It is a skill one performs; it is a service one renders. True leadership is a working relationship among group members" (Lewis 1996, 46).

The leadership techniques of youth ministers may be as unique as the individuals themselves, and yet there are many ways in which youth ministers are alike in their approach to leading their team. This is evident in Table 8 where the 18 youth

ministers surveyed gave fifty-four individual answers, agreeing on many aspects of leadership and being very diverse on others. Nonetheless, as part of a comprehensive youth program youth ministers should seek to reach out and impact individuals beyond youth. The leadership team and the parents of youth are the natural relationships that would more than likely fall under the youth minister's influence. "A youth minister can assure these relationships by viewing youth ministry in thirds. A third of the youth ministry with parents, a third with youth leaders, and a third with youth will point the ministry toward balance of peer and intergenerational activities. This will involve more people in youth ministry, providing a more balanced approach" (Black 1991, 46).

Based on your expertise, what are some key elements of leadership?

Based on Table 8, the expertise of youth ministers with extended tenures shows the key element in leadership is in building the team. The youth minister is responsible for building a team which can work together in accomplishing the goal. These uniquely gifted individuals work together and provide a living example of faith. "Effective youth ministry requires a team of dedicated, committed adults who can minister to youth and involve them in a journey of Christian discipleship. Youth need to know adults of all ages so they can see Christianity in action. Adult leaders model what faith means in everyday life" (Black 1991, 51). The youth minister is also responsible for the overall environment in which those under his leadership work towards the common goal. The youth minister, or team leader, guides the team through the many obstacles while pressing onward towards the objective. While the team is comprised of those individuals who are focused on their place in ministry, much of the power comes from being encouraged by other

team members and part of a team with a common goal. "People are more highly motivated when they feel they are in the right position and belong to an exciting, dynamic team" (Black 1991, 67).

Sharing vision and casting vision ranked second in key elements of leadership by youth ministers surveyed. "You must have a vision of what God can do in the life of your young people and through your youth group" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 208). Without vision, ministries would not be able to move effectively toward the goals and purposes set before them. As God is the origin of the vision for any youth ministry, it is he who empowers and grants the ability to see what is before the youth minister. "As a person of God, you must have the ability to see first, see the most, and see the farthest into the future" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 208). Much of this vision is not only based on what the youth minister may believe in themselves and their team, but to the youth group as well. "If you want to build a great youth work, you must have a great vision of what God can do through your teens" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 208). Pursuing kingdom goals in youth ministry involves not only equipping and empowering adults, but empowering and equipping youth. It is important to note that activities are not the end result of youth ministry and its team. Activities are some of the means by which the goals are accomplished.

Too many times we see our ministry as a string of activities. As we look into the future, our minds merely extend that stream of events – youth meetings, retreats, conversations over a Coke, and more activities. The eyes of vision, however, are filled not with activities but outcomes. They see change, movement. They envision a fully formed reality in a future that is different from the present. (Patty 2005, 14)

By observation, youth ministers surveyed seemed to understand their role as a leader, which is to lead but to lead by example and model servanthood. In modeling

servanthood and leading by example, youth ministers show that they are not separated from the team and group as a whole. "Those who are greatest in the kingdom of God achieve that greatness by being servants. To minister is to serve, and those who would be first in God's kingdom must picture themselves as servants of God and the family of God" (Black 1991, 21). The disciples learned this lesson from Jesus who served and modeled this concept for them so that in turn they would live it out and serve others. "To follow His example, they had to be willing to serve each other. Greatness in Christian ministry is not measured in outward rank or coercive power but in proportion to service" (Black 1991, 21).

A number of those surveyed conveyed the understanding that leadership begins with God. "Christian leadership receives direction from God, it does not simply wait for incidents that dictate responses" (Black 1991, 21). Effective leadership then is proactive and not reactive. The long-term youth ministers in this group gave the impression of constantly moving towards a goal and ultimate purpose and not wrongly assuming that the goal would somehow come to them.

Effective delegation was also ranked as a key element of leadership and was conveyed by the youth ministers surveyed as a means of empowering the team and its members. Shared responsibility is a way in which team members can be elevated and not feel like they are not simply warm bodies who have been asked to watch students. "Rather than feeling insulted, most people sense trust and respect when they are asked to assume a responsibility. Delegation is not a way to get out of work. Rather, it is a wise way to multiply the energies of many people and do a better job of ministry" (Black 1991, 176). By their responses, youth ministers surveyed conveyed that they do not simply ask

adults to complete a youth event. Their goal is to partner with others to fulfill the purpose God has set before them. “It is important for these volunteer adults to realize that they are not being recruited to help a youth minister carry out tasks, but rather to share God’s workload” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 49)

It could be said that a leader has truly succeeded when it is difficult to think about a leader without thinking about his team and vice versa. “That Walt Disney so readily acknowledged the value of collaboration is a measure of his greatness – or perhaps the cause of it” (Capodagli and Jackson 1999, 79). Through some of the responses of the youth ministers surveyed this is also evident. When asked about their personal leadership style the youth ministers actually chose to defer to their team. While they acknowledged their own responsibility, the leader did not, or could not, talk about ministry and accomplishments without making sure the team was acknowledged as well.

Youth ministers surveyed expressed investing in the ministry team as another element of leadership, which takes the form of time, support, training, and making sure members of the team know they are valued and important to the task of ministry. Training, and even educating team members, means helping them understand and know more about themselves as believers and how each one is gifted by God to serve. “It is the task of the youth minister to help people discover their spiritual gifts and find places of expression for those gifts” (Black 1991, 51). One youth minister said the time he spends with students is equal to the amount of time he spends with members of his team. While it may seem like this would take away from the students it actually helps ensure they will have effective leadership, and more of it, as the youth minister multiplies himself in order to ensure effective ministry to the group.

Recruiting, specifically recruiting with job descriptions, was noted as an element of leadership among youth ministers who have experienced extended tenures. Job descriptions, or a covenant between the youth minister and the volunteer, allow each individual to know what is expected of them and what they can expect from each other. “A youth leader’s covenant that spells out the amount of time, type of duties, and level of performance lets the leader know up front what is expected. It paints a more realistic picture of the challenges and fulfillment that are part of youth leadership. It serves as a motivation for leaders to improve their involvement in all areas of service” (Black 1991, 62). By observation, many times youth ministers enlist workers by conveying all the fun and excitement without mentioning the challenges that are unique to youth ministry. This type of enlistment can shorten a worker’s time in youth ministry if they become overwhelmed. Youth workers should be given the consideration and honesty of what awaits them in youth ministry as an adult volunteer. “People deserve to know what commitments they are making. They deserve to know what is expected of them. They deserve to know what kind of support and training is available” (Black 1991, 62). Not only does a description of responsibilities give the volunteer their due consideration, it also helps them be more effective in their role as a team member. “A youth worker needs clear aims to give purpose and direction to his energies” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 204).

While the youth ministers surveyed used adults to make up their teams, it was conveyed that recruitment was much more selective in building a volunteer team. While many adults may be willing to serve, the youth minister should endeavor to find those whom God has chosen and called. “Though everyone in the congregation is a potential

volunteer leader, one still must be selective. The critical process of selection may involve a series of steps such as those proposed by Barry St. Clair, who warns of the need to protect both the young persons, as well as the at risk volunteer” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 136). This process may involve any number of steps. The youth minister may incorporate a written application, as well as an interview with the potential youth worker. If a potential youth worker has worked on the youth ministry team at another church, the youth minister may call the youth minister of that church to inquire about the involvement and performance of the youth worker during their time as part of that team. “The screening process must do more than eliminate those who can harm young people. It needs to be a way of finding those who genuinely love the Lord, enjoy young people, and sense God’s call. It needs to identify adults with a mature faith who also have the ability to share that faith with others, especially teenagers” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 136).

A volunteer team has the ability to pursue and accomplish any goal that may be before them. Sam, the youth minister a group of 250 students with an all volunteer team, is a great example of this. Each volunteer member of the ministry team is a specialist due to the individual’s life experiences and place where they are currently. Older adults have a lifetime’s worth of knowledge to share and invest in younger generations. They also possess the knowledge of how things work in the church if they have been there for a long period of time. Parents of children and youth understand what it is to be a parent and to love children unconditionally. This is something youth ministers need to be reminded of throughout their career. By observation, college students as volunteers are the best at understanding where youth are coming from since they are just a year or two out of the

youth group. Having college students as part of the leadership team also encourages the youth in showing them that they may also be a part of the ministry team as an adult when they graduate high school and that there is life in the church after the youth group.

The study also showed the wide use of small groups. Relationships are the conduit through which ministry flows, these relationships happen within small groups. Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, and discipleship groups are all examples of this and they are all powered by volunteers. While a volunteer may be willing to be a part of the ministry team, they will still need to be trained. This is an opportune time to also get insight from them as they may know some of the students better than others on the team. This researcher did not have children when he started in youth ministry so he was dependent upon the parents on his team to give a parental perspective into students and events. It has also helped the researcher, now as the father of two sons, in parenting his own children.

Training can take many different forms. Retreats, conferences, weekly and/or monthly meetings are all effective ways in which to equip members of the ministry team. Perhaps the most effective way to do this is through a combination of meetings, such as using monthly meetings then taking the team to special regional or national conferences at certain times during the year. The team needs to be equipped with practical instruction, such as leading small group discussions, ways to reach out to students, and effective teaching are a few examples. As the church's resident specialist on youth ministry, the youth minister should be ready to train the team. This regular training instills confidence in the team and its members. "Effective training keeps volunteers excited and ready to tackle new responsibilities. Without it, they may feel overwhelmed, discouraged, and

incapable” (Feldmeyer 1989, 88). This time together also familiarizes the team with each other and builds trust among them.

Another implication out of this aspect of leadership techniques is the understanding that youth ministers do not only minister to youth, their reach and influence should stretch across generations in the church family. The youth minister should seek to involve as many as possible in the work of the church.

Youth ministers in this study felt strongly about developing and equipping leaders in the youth group as an element of leadership. The approach of equipping and giving students the opportunity to serve was overwhelmingly the method in which long term youth ministers developed leaders within their youth group. Just as it is important to develop adults into leadership positions, the youth minister cannot neglect the opportunity and privilege to develop a student in the youth group. The researcher believes, and puts into practice, the belief that youth ministers have the responsibility to develop these student leaders and to do everything possible to help them see their potential and shine among their peers. These young leaders should be given the opportunity to serve and see all sides of ministry, particularly those who feel they are called into ministry. These leaders are done a tremendous disservice when they only see the “fun stuff” of ministry without seeing all the work that it takes to plan and put together an event.

The long term youth ministers in this study conveyed staying in a constant state of evaluation in many areas, particularly as it applies to themselves as a learner. This element of leadership was crucial to some who completed the survey. When those times come around when the youth minister feels as if the ministry is beyond his qualifications,

taking advantage of additional training through seminars or focused study in the field is an effective way in which to stay current in youth ministry.

Feeling unqualified should motivate a youth minister to take advantage of learning opportunities. This should mean going beyond merely looking for new ideas or trying to become skilled in the how-to's of youth ministry. Assuming responsibility for professional growth means trying to increase one's understanding and knowledge of the field – all of which requires a program of reading and study. Over time a person's attention to the thoughtful side of youth ministry is bound to provide the insight a youth minister needs for becoming creative in ministering to current needs. (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 104-105)

While the entire youth group and its program are important, the youth minister should never neglect the individuals that make up the group. Youth ministers should find those few students God has laid on their heart to invest their lives in. Some of the greatest and most complete joy in ministry for this researcher has been in investing his life into students who then enter youth ministry and repeat the process. "Jesus trained and prepared the most successful leadership team of all time. Their achievements after Jesus' departure prove that leadership can be passed on by adequately investing in a plan for succession. Be a good steward of your leadership by preparing for the inevitable time when you will no longer lead" (Briner and Pritchard. 1997, 128).

What do you see as your personal leadership style?

Youth ministers surveyed articulated that their personal leadership style primarily revolved around one of three styles: team approach, one who equips and empowers, a coach. Even though these styles are closely related, this study expressed them individually since they were articulated in those terms by those who responded to the survey. It is noteworthy, however, that combining the similar styles (team approach,

one who equips and empowers, a coach, shared responsibility) represented 17 of the 18 youth ministers. There was a common denominator of these leadership styles that could not be ignored. "The point is that a youth minister cannot do it alone. It is important to have assistance" (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 135).

The team approach brings all the members of the ministry's leadership down to one level with each member functioning as they are gifted. Bringing the entire team together would be like a puzzle with each piece fitting and functioning in order to complete a picture. One advantage of this leadership style is in the relationships that are readily available between members. "Good relationships between the youth minister and volunteer youth leaders will multiply the ministry with youth" (Black 1991, 45).

Another strong leadership style indicated by youth ministers who were surveyed said they saw themselves as one who equips and empowers a group of individuals for ministry. "A youth minister has the responsibility of equipping the saints for ministry" (Black 2001, 53). While equipping one's team is a duty of its leader, this leadership style has proven effective for those with extended tenures. As the individual responsible for equipping the team, the youth minister is making them ready to minister to students. The youth ministers surveyed not only equipped their teams but empowered them giving the confidence and authority to meet the needs of the students and their families.

Some youth ministers who were surveyed also conveyed their leadership styles specifically as that of the coach of the team. "A good coach can make all the difference between success and failure, between hitting the ceiling in our growth or breaking through to the next level" (Patty 2005, 222). Perhaps some of the distinction the youth

ministers surveyed saw between a coach and an equipper was in the individual attention a coach may give to those on the team. “Coaching is time-consuming, and we won’t be able to do it with everyone we work with. Certainly, teaching, training, and group experiences can significantly move people down the road of growth. But I’m convinced we won’t produce top leaders without investing focused time and attention in skillful coaching” (Patty 2005, 222-223). This coaching approach to leadership resembles that of a mentor and mentee. There is also an aspect of analyzing that is evident in this style of leadership. “A good coach is always testing the balance of essential elements to see if the ministry is providing the proper environment for growth” (Patty 2005, 226). The principles in this style of leadership have proven to be effective for those youth ministers with extended tenures in this study.

As stated earlier, whichever leadership style the youth ministers surveyed chose, 17 out of 18 of those youth ministers utilize a style in which they involve numerous individuals. “A wise youth minister will look for ways to share leadership with many adults who in turn will touch the lives of youth” (Black 1991, 47).

Though not mentioned as frequent as other leadership styles, modeling was also a style of leadership indicated by some long term youth ministers. “The vision caster must embody the vision, and decide to follow more because of their confidence in the person than because they fully understand the goal. One who leads with vision ties himself to the mast of the ship, personally placing himself on the line as proof that the cause is a worthy one” (Patty 2005, 28). The youth minister becomes a tangible example of what is to be done and how to do it. Also, as the youth minister “ties himself to the mast of the ship” he shows that he is sold out for the vision and direction of the ministry.

This modeling style of leadership is still grounded in the principle that God desires to be glorified through those who love follow him. As Jesus modeled servant leadership to those who followed, he continually taught them to do what he does. Jesus washing the disciples feet “was a lesson in love and leadership that disciples down through the ages must understand if they are to follow the model of leadership given by Jesus” (Black 1991, 20). Even today, youth ministers are still following Jesus’ style of leadership through modeling.

The modeling style of leadership leads to that of being a servant and incorporating this attitude in style of leadership which some youth ministers articulated through the survey. Jesus told His disciples that He did not come to be served but to serve, even to the point of giving up His life for many (Mark 10:45). Jesus’ challenge to serve Him through serving others remains in ministry today.

The skill of youth ministry you will learn over time, honing your strategy with wisdom acquired through experience. The heart of youth ministry is *you*, and you either are a servant or you’re not. While skill is primarily learned, a servant is mostly molded. While skill develops growing confidence, service exposes emerging humility. While skill is quite important to youth ministry, the heart of a servant is *essential* to it. (Patty 2005, 273)

Through surveys, the youth ministers were able to articulate their expertise and knowledge on several aspects of ministry, however, throughout their responses there was a deep message and passion to love others and the desire to see them as Christ sees them. The type of servanthood makes God’s glory in Jesus the focus of everything else that is done.

The most powerful person in the room at any given moment is not the person with position or prestige, but rather it’s the person most determined to love and bless the others present. The person with the mind of Christ who sees the true state of other’s

hearts, whose own heart stirs with compassion, and whose energy moves lovingly toward the others. This is the power of a servant! (Patty 2005, 276)

Vision and being a visionary was also part of some of the population sample's style of leadership. This aspect of leadership gave the youth minister a glimpse of what is ahead and what the future looks like. "As believers we possess a huge advantage in developing vision. The God we serve is a God of the future, seeing what will be as clearly as if it were today. The most powerful visions are not conceived but received from the hands of the King who is weaving a tapestry that encompasses all of history" (Patty 2005, 15). The youth minister then must remain close to God in his relationship in order to hear and see clearly what God will lay out before him. Since God is the origin of vision, the youth minister does not need to try to create or manufacture the vision or direction in which God desires the ministry to go. The challenge for the youth minister will be in interpreting the visions and conveying it to others, particularly those on the ministry team. "Once a leader begins to see the shape of things ahead, he must communicate to others in a way that they begin to also see. Those who lead with vision must work hard at the art of vision casting because the power of a vision is closely to its ability to energize and engage others" (Patty 2005, 17).

Describe your youth ministry team and its function.

In describing their youth ministry teams, the population sample acknowledged using both volunteers and paid staff. In fact, 16 of the 18 youth ministers surveyed indicated the use of volunteers while 7 indicated the use of interns or assistants. "Many (volunteer) youth leaders serve out of a sense of calling and a desire to serve God and

their brothers and sisters in Christ. God calls volunteers into youth ministry as surely as He calls those who serve Him in paid positions” (Black 1991, 52). The youth minister should be able to see and affirm the call of an adult volunteer to serve in youth ministry. This helps the individual find their purpose and ministry within the church, as well as gives the youth minister another adult to utilize in reaching students and their families.

Paid staff in youth ministry in the form of interns and assistants was also effectively utilized by the population sample. While one particular youth minister of a large youth group uses an all volunteer team, as mentioned earlier, others choose to bring on individuals to the church staff.

The New Testament suggests the reason for using interns. First, Christ chose twelve who were called to be with Him, learn from Him, and continue the work He started. They did little to build the kingdom of God while Christ was living among them. In fact, they often stumbled in their efforts and held back the work Jesus was doing. But their ministry blossomed after Christ ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to work through them. The teachings of Christ and first-hand experience as part of His earthly ministry thrust them into key leadership roles under the power of the Holy Spirit. (Black 1991, 75)

Either practice is acceptable and, by observation, much of whether or not a youth minister uses volunteers or paid staff may be dependent upon the church budget. Still, this should not diminish the volunteer’s call to youth ministry and the responsibility one has in fulfilling that call.

Whether the team is paid or unpaid, the fact remains that youth ministry requires more than one individual. “Leading a youth group also calls for multiple gifts and energies. Teachers for Sunday School classes, leaders for discipleship and missions education groups, coaches, sponsors for youth trips, and counselors for camps and retreats must be found and trained” (Black 1991, 52). These small groups are important to the life

and health of a youth ministry and it takes a team of called individuals to maintain and grow them. How each of these responsibilities are handled may vary. For instance, the coach of a sports team should have a different method in which to reach young people than the teacher of a small group. While the methods may vary, the end result is the same. “In a Sunday School class, the youth worker has several aims: He wants to communicate biblical content, he wants teens to respond to the Gospel, and he wants teens to have Christian fellowship. These are several aims, leading to a definite goal – the maturity of the young person” (Vukich and Vandegriff, 2002, 205). It would be virtually impossible for one individual to effectively lead each of these groups. “The youth minister who tries to do all this alone has a severe handicap. It is like trying to accomplish the mission of the church with both hands and feet tied” (Black 1991, 52).

Well over half of the sample population articulated using parents and adults in their ministry teams. Those surveyed conveyed the value of parents as irreplaceable members of the team, not simply as an individual filling a spot but as a person of influence in the lives of youth. “Parents are the strongest influence on their teenagers. If we hope to influence youth toward Christ, we must influence the homes of youth” (Black 1991, 45). Involving adults, particularly parents of youth, in their lives brings another added dimension to the relationship between adult and youth. There are, however, some legitimate stereotypes that youth and adults have regarding one another. “Adults too often have a stereotypical assumption that youth do not want meaningful relationships with a church’s adults – an assumption that is dead wrong. Youth actually do want such relationships” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn, 2001, 52). This makes the importance of using adults all the more vital in ministry teams as these youth ministers challenge and

debunk stereotypes between youth and adults. The population sample conveyed healthy relationships with youth and adults, attributing growth to this intentional aspect of their ministries. Dr. Wes Black, of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, noted, “some of the best youth leaders I have known were parents of teenagers in the youth group. Sunday School teachers, discipleship group leaders, softball coaches, and youth camp counselors have all come from the ranks of parents. Parents can be assets to youth ministry by serving in leadership positions or helping in a variety of ways” (Black 1991, 57). The mere presence of parents and adults conveys the feeling that the youth are important and that they have a friend if the time comes when a youth needs to speak with an adult.

Several from the population noted that college students make up part of their ministry team. “College and seminary students provide an additional source of leadership and learn youth ministry on a first-hand basis” (Black 1991, 75). Whether the college students are called into vocational or lay ministry, this provides a unique opportunity for these young adults to participate in youth ministry as an adult leader instead of a youth. This occasion can help the college student begin to see how they will fit in and fulfill their call to ministry within the church.

Older adults were also mentioned by the population sample as important parts of their ministry teams. These adults have the unique opportunity to share their life’s experiences and wisdom with youth in the group, as well as with the youth minister. The youth minister who only sees his influence and attention directed at youth will most certainly miss out on the wealth of knowledge older adults bring. “Youth ministry should build bridges across the generations. A youth minister who spends time only with youth

misses out on valuable opportunities for growth and assistance in ministry that can come from all of God's people" (Black 1991, 45). Youth ministry has a universal appeal about it and the excitement and energy youth bring to a church can be inspiring. These older adults have the chance to minister to youth at any given time in the hallway. What might be thought of as trivial by an older adult could mean a lot to a student. "A hug or handshake from a senior adult can mean as much as having a good time at a retreat. A youth who longs for attention will respond to someone of any age who shows love and concern" (Black 1991, 45). Older adults may be at a point in their lives where they are looking for the opportunity to be involved in meaningful work and part of an exciting area of ministry. These same adults are great examples of the faith and living it out in later years. Again, Dr. Wes Black, writes, "some of the best youth leaders I have known were senior adults. They have the time to give to youth activities and often enjoy working with teenagers. Senior adults with a positive outlook on life can bring joy and excitement to youth and provide a beautiful model of Christian faith in a different generation from adolescents" (Black 1991, 53-54). By their responses, it was evident that part of the populations sample had, in fact, tapped into this valuable resource in youth ministry as older adults were noted as being significant parts of the ministry team.

While the ministry teams of the population sample were diverse in some way and yet similar in others, there was an emphasis placed upon meeting regularly. Meeting to dream dreams and make plans aids team building. Sunday School workers need to meet weekly to plan for Bible study, outreach, and ministry. Other youth leaders also need regular meetings to plan the work of their groups. All youth leaders need to meet at least quarterly for calendar planning and discussion about upcoming youth events. (Black 1991, 59)

While the monthly meetings serve a purpose in conveying information and communicating priorities, there is also great value in the relationships adults will build

between each other during this time. This becomes an opportune time for the youth minister to convey information about upcoming events and sign ups through the small groups leaders.

Are there ways in which you train and develop your team?

Each youth minister from the population, recognized and conveyed the importance of developing and training the youth ministry's leaders and teachers. While some of this training is led by the youth minister, other training times would be in the form of retreats and conferences. In using a previously stated leadership style, "for a youth leader to neglect this priority (of the team) would be like a football coach taking the field by himself because he didn't want to face the difficulties of recruiting and training a team. By definition, such a coach is not coach at all. Regardless of what may be great skill on the field, youth pastors who are so caught up with the game that they neglect the recruitment and training of a team are neglecting a central feature of what it means to be called a pastor" (Robbins 2004, 524). Training the ministry team was conveyed as being foundational to the population sample. It was not perceived as being optional for them as the minister responsible for the team. "The basic premises of volunteer youth ministry are theological and not experiential. Preparing God's people for works of service is at the heart of the Church's mandate" (Robbins 2004, 521). Training for individuals of the ministry team is an investment in, not only the individual, but to the team and ultimately to the group. There is no limit to the possible ways and topics leaders can be trained and educated. Whatever is relevant and applicable to their lives and to their responsibilities on the ministry team are areas in which further training and education is needed. "These

leaders should be trained and educated about the present culture, and their personal gifts should be developed for the greatest impact possible” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 263). From the population sample of youth ministers, retreats and conferences are effective ways in which to enrich and grow the ministry team. It is sometimes easy for adult volunteers to get in a routine or rut in their approach to youth ministry. Retreats and conferences are a way to get team members to see youth ministry from a fresh perspective. “They will put you in touch with the latest knowledge, skills, and materials for working with youth. They will also help build relationships with the community of those with common interests in youth ministry” (Black 1991, 168). Individuals who make up the ministry team should be challenged and encouraged. These times of retreats and training should also bring the individual back to their reason for being on the ministry team. By observation, team members can get distracted from their purpose amidst the hype and excitement of youth ministry. When team members lose sight of the ministry’s objectives, the effectiveness of the team will decrease. “Effective volunteer youth ministry boils down to people with a purpose” (Robbins 2004, 527).

How do you develop student leaders in your group?

As the population described their ministry team’s make-up, it was clear the team was comprised of not only adults, but youth as well. It was further conveyed in the survey that there was just as much excitement, if not more, in equipping and giving youth the opportunity to serve in their own area of ministry as servant leaders. Researcher Merton Strommen comments that a “major imperative in youth work is to help youth into a sense of mission, of being sent for a purpose and a task, so they will come to know the sense of

purposefulness that grips the person who has responded to God's love" (Strommen 1979, 111). The sample of youth ministers recognized this foundational element in building and equipping a youth ministry team. After all, youth can be some of the most effective ambassadors in reaching others for Christ. "If ministry is to students, then young people are the objects, the recipients, and the end points of our ministry. If ministry is with and among students, then we see as our job to share the ministry with those to whom we minister. In other words, we need to equip young people with the maturity, skills, and resources to minister to one another" (Patty 2005, 7). Furthermore, as youth are not stepping up in their roles of leadership they are also given the opportunity to see what vocational ministry is about and if they may be called to it. The preparation for going into vocational ministry begins at one's calling, serving then becomes a testing ground for one's abilities and giftedness. "God never calls us to do what we've not been prepared to do (1 Thessalonians 5:24). If, for example, someone is four feet tall, it would not take a whole night of prayer to discern that maybe God isn't calling him to the NBA, except perhaps as an usher at the arena. The question to ask is a simple one: Has God given me gifts, talents, experiences, the aptitude, and the temperament for ministry?" (Robbins 2005, 29).

This population of youth ministers also found the importance, power, and privilege of having one-on-one time with students, particularly those in leadership and those called to ministry. "There is no substitute for life-on-life. No program can achieve the kind of persuasive influence that human intimacy can. No presentation can match the holistic, multidimensional teaching like that mediated by human relationships" (Patty 2005, 5). The relationships a youth minister has is vital to the ongoing effectiveness of the

team and to youth ministry as a whole since some of these relationships involve those called to youth ministry. These students will learn from the example they see in their youth minister and the ministry team. Youth ministers are intentional about setting this example. "Their ministry is one marked by service to God and other people. They lead youth to follow the example lived out before them and ultimately to follow the example Christ has given for servant leadership" (Black 1991, 21). Therefore, the youth minister's aim, as shown by the population sample, is to serve and be followed all the while pointing youth to Christ and showing them that the youth minister is following Christ as well.

Call to Ministry

This population revealed that the college years were pivotal among long-term youth ministers as they realized their call to ministry during this time. It is at this stage in many lives where careers were decided. The youth minister, as a guide and friend, should be willing and even search out opportunities to help college students during this time. Finding a trusted friend to discuss this matter is pivotal in affirming God's call (Johnson 2002).

This research also showed how not only a stage in life was critical in discerning God's call, but also as it pertained to an event in which the youth minister began to understand God's call to ministry. Youth ministers should make sure that events are not just activities that are attended but intentional events in which students can hear God speaking to them. "The call of God to a vocation begins as an idea in your mind, often triggered by an event" (Johnson 2002, 21). The call to ministry is not biased to age; this study revealed calls to ministry that ranged in age from middle school through

adulthood. The youth minister needs to be aware that the call to ministry can go to any person at any age, all the more important to be ready to talk with and guide these individuals through the process.

An additional implication in the call to ministry is that the majority of the long-term youth ministers in this study were serving, and active, in the capacity to which they were called. Again, as stated earlier, all the more important to have opportunities for service in ministry for those who are seeking God's direction in their lives. "Testing the call to ministry is our opportunity to mature to a new and more sustaining understanding" (Schnase 1993, 15). Trying out different areas of service, within an area of ministry or a different ministry altogether, gives the individual a feel for what the ministry would be like and allows God another opportunity to affirm the call to a specific ministry. One youth minister surveyed grew up as a preacher's kid and discovered the call to ministry while exposed to the idea on a daily basis. "It may emerge through an upbringing in the life and work of the church, with the prospect of serving it in full-time ministry evolving as a professional option" (Watson 1982, 29).

Still other implications in the call to youth ministry include being burdened for youth and having a deep love for them as expressed by over half of the long-term youth ministers. This love and burden for youth is something that is from God and is felt deep within an individual. It is not simply the excitement that is brought about by high energy events and the desire to do that for the rest of one's life. This burden and love for youth involves seeing their potential long before they do and investing one's life into seeing it fulfilled.

Just as the call to ministry comes in many different ways, so too, does God reaffirm a youth minister's call. One long term youth minister said they could not pinpoint one certain time and place they received the call, but have felt the call daily since entering youth ministry. This reaffirmation can come in just as many ways as the call itself. The youth minister is challenged and encouraged to be looking for this as God desires to strengthen those in ministry.

Youth ministers need to understand that their walk and relationship with Christ should be of the utmost importance. This constantly growing relationship will be paramount in longevity. When a church calls a youth minister who is already on staff at a church, that youth minister could mistake that as God calling him to leave if his walk and prayer life are not strong. Youth ministers do not have to take every opportunity that comes along, nor do they have to take another position for the sole purpose of money. In some cases, like for this writer, God uses a church that is seeking a youth minister to reaffirm their call to their current church.

Some long term youth ministers suggested effectiveness in the youth group as a way in which the call to ministry is affirmed. While it can be one of the ways of affirmation, like Wade, this researcher would caution about using group effectiveness as a sole determinant of affirmation. Youth groups, just like students, can sometimes be fickle; one week they may think their youth minister is the best in the world, the next week they may be packing for his departure. Because of this, youth ministers can sometimes misread their call if things aren't going well in the group or if they do not think the students like him. It should be noted that none of the long term ministers

surveyed suggested using group effectiveness as a sole determinant in affirming the call to ministry.

Describe your call to ministry.

As shown previously, serving in youth ministry as an adult or youth has a major impact on the individual and ministry itself. When the population sample was asked to give insight into their call to ministry, over half of them stated that they were serving in youth ministry in some capacity when they felt called to vocational ministry. Furthermore, some of these youth ministers wrote that they were at a conference when they felt God call them to ministry, which again supports the importance of retreats and conferences not only as a means of training the team, but also in allowing God to work through the opportunity to call them to ministry. Approximately 14 of the population described receiving their call to ministry while a youth or student in college. This supports the importance of being intentional in enlisting and equipping students to be a part of the youth ministry team. During this time, God begins to work in the heart of the individual, convincing them to have faith and trust God for what he will accomplish through the youth group. "You must believe God can change their lives; therefore, you work to that end" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 208). This desire to work with youth and see God impact their lives was a recurring theme throughout the survey. The youth ministers were, and remain, convinced God is bringing about change to a generation through youth. Through this desire God was bringing about a spirit of brokenness and giving the individual "a heart of compassion for teens" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 207).

How did you know you were specifically called to youth ministry?

Continuing this theme of being called to ministry, the population sample was asked to comment on how they knew they were called specifically to youth ministry. Being burdened for and having a love for youth was the overwhelming response of over half the sample. "The first biblical criterion for effective youth work is a love for God and of course a love for teens" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 208). The priorities of these two loves must be intentional as the youth ministers surveyed have articulated previously. Out of a love for and obedience to God in being called to ministry, the individual's emphasis in ministry is focused more specifically to youth. "The calling to a life of ministry joins with sincere love for youth in a desire to serve God through the specific ministry with youth" (Black 1991, 168). This love for God and from God is what may keep being involved in one area of ministry exciting and fulfilling. Without it, the individual could settle into an unhealthy routine driven by the latest fads and flashy programs. "A sense of divine leadership pointing toward a lifetime of service to God is necessary for effective ministry with youth. A sincere love for and sympathetic understanding of youth is a second step toward preparation for youth ministry. Youth ministry can evolve into a series of rote activities and meaningless tasks without a desire to touch the lives of youth in all spheres of life" (Black 1991, 168).

Understanding and embracing one's specific call and being like-minded with others in their call can make youth ministry a joy for the individual and the team. It may, as the population has conveyed, influence longevity. "To operate a ministry to youth with

individuals you really don't care for is not the best idea! Those who work with the teens must have a passion, a desire to do so" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 263).

One youth minister in the population responded by saying the call to ministry, specifically youth ministry, came after much prayer and seeking God. "The call of ministry is the prominence, power, and prescription of prayer" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 229). This emphasis on prayer should go on as the youth minister continues ministering to youth and their families. The dependence of the youth minister on God and His strength, wisdom, and love is imperative.

Another youth minister in the population sample stated that they saw their calling to ministry, specifically youth ministry, as something that is ongoing. It carries with it a daily sense of being where God wants them in ministry. This particular person made it clear that there was no desire to leave youth ministry, rather the desire to remain near God in their calling. Duffy Robbins, Associate Professor of Youth Ministry at Eastern University and a thirty-year veteran of youth ministry, in differentiating between a career and a calling addressed the idea of a daily calling to ministry. "A vocation or calling is different (from a career). Derived from the Latin word *voco*, it points neither to a map nor a guidebook, but to the ultimate guide. The emphasis isn't on following a course but on responding to a voice – no schedule, no itinerary, no well-laid plans" (Robbins 2005, 27).

How was your call affirmed?

Once a youth minister has understood the call to ministry, it is important to look for ways in which God affirm this decision. The support of the pastor and church

through encouragement is crucial to a healthy approach to ministry. In responding to this question, many of the population sample conveyed their call to ministry was affirmed by the church. “There’s great encouragement in knowing one is set apart for the work and supported in the work by a local church community” (Robbins 2005, 30).

What do you feel is a common misconception regarding the call to ministry?

Because, as stated previously, calling or vocation can appear more abstract than the term *career*, there are certain misconceptions about ministry, specifically youth ministry, that were addressed by the population. One of these misconceptions was that youth ministry isn’t “real” ministry. Perhaps due to the nature of the ministry in working with youth, people perceive this calling as second to leading a church. “The youth minister’s calling is equal to and just as important as the calling to be the senior pastor of a church” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 235). Also, by observation, people assume that youth ministry is merely a stepping-stone to one day becoming a pastor and fail to see youth ministry as the lifelong calling as addressed earlier. “The call to youth ministry is a valid, lifelong call to serve God through a ministry with youth, their families, and the adults who leads youth. It is not a stepping-stone to some larger or more important ministry. It is not something to do to gain a little experience until one can move into a “real” ministry position” (Black 1991, 167).

Another misconception expressed by the population sample was that ministry isn’t hard work. While ministry is exciting and fulfilling, by observation, ask any minister if they work hard and the predictable response would be a resounding “yes”. Many ministers are always “on call” and available to their church at any time, day or night.

This, along with the knowledge that ministers do much of their work when no one is around, easily addresses the fact that ministry is time consuming and demanding.

Still, the population, believes that people perceive the call to ministry to be based on feeling rather than guidance and being led by God. Although misleading, it is somewhat understandable since one's call to ministry is an issue of faith and obedience, things which are unseen except for the works that are produced. Robbins identifies these as "those deep inner nudges of God's secret call to ministry" (Robbins 2005, 27).

Spiritual Giftedness

If the youth minister understands his call to ministry, not only will he be more likely to remain in that position, but his ability to use his spiritual gifts will also affect his happiness and fulfillment. As a youth minister is empowered by the Holy Spirit with specific gifts to aid in the execution of his responsibilities, he is able to work more efficiently and with more satisfaction than in trying to handle aspects of his position alone. This also involves having a team of dedicated youth workers who are gifted in areas which the youth minister is weaker. The coming together of these workers, along with the youth minister, can be likened to a machine with many parts yet, functions smoothly in performing its purpose.

There are a number of implications regarding longevity and leadership in youth ministry. It should be noted that most of the long term youth ministers who completed the study's survey indicated more than one spiritual gift. The researcher then contacted these subjects and asked for one primary gift, with great reluctance most of the youth ministers indicated what they understood to be their primary spiritual gift. Some of the difficulty in

this for them was the fact that their gifts are so intertwined it is difficult to know where one gift ends and another begins. One of these youth ministers, whose gifts included shepherding and government/leadership, with great reservation finally understood one gift to be primary but noted that “no vision (government/leadership) is good without the relationship (pastor/shepherding).” This meshing of the gifts is a strong indicator of the gifts working together as God intends. The gifts were not meant to be compartmentalized. They are to be turned on and off at will. They are to become part of the individual who possesses them.

Youth ministers need to know their spiritual gifts, but in order to efficiently utilize the strength of their ministry team the minister needs to know the spiritual gifts of the team members. This would allow the youth minister to put team members in positions appropriate to their giftedness. Every believer is charged to search out their spiritual gifts. “You are responsible for identifying your gift, developing it, and then using it for the glory of God” (Stanley 1999, vii).

What is your primary spiritual gift?

“In order to be an effective youth pastor, the person will need to have the characteristics related to shepherd-leadership. The whole concept of shepherding has the connotation that he is looking after and caring for a particular flock” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 235). A significant number in the population understood their spiritual gift to be that of pastor-shepherd. This spiritual gift, and leadership style, requires intimate knowledge and understanding of those within his care and under his area of responsibility. “The shepherd-leader knows his young flock. He is conscious of any

idiosyncrasies. He knows about the world they live in and the cataclysmic changes they have to deal with” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 236). Therefore, this spiritual giftedness requires more than sitting with the sheep. It carries with it the responsibility to know and understand the world around them in order to know how to address and deal with the influences that would seek to disrupt or destroy his flock. “There is no question in my mind that the youth pastor can be and is to be a shepherd-leader. The flock he leads requires the same love and care that any other age-group flock would need. Surely this person in charge of kids is a pastor in the truest form of the word” (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 238). Along with pastor-shepherd, the gift of government/leadership was also mentioned. By casual observation, while the gifts are distinct, it is easy to see the commonality these gifts have and how they empower effective youth ministry. These two gifts indicated comprise more than half the responses given by the population sample. The spiritual gifts of pastor-shepherd and government/leadership, then, are fitting for those in youth ministry

The best way in which to affirm spiritual gifts is to use them. Well over half of the youth ministers surveyed noted that their gifts are affirmed through their use. This suggests being in places of ministry and service where a variety of gifts are used so that one could better determine what their gifts are. Ministry must be experienced, which requires activity on the part of the individual; inactivity would not affirm spiritual gifts. When motivated and powered by a spiritual gift, a simple mundane task can be turned into a joy. “Recognizing our spiritual gifts can also make service for God a real blessing instead of a burden” (Baxter 1983, 66). The youth minister must also be able to identify

spiritual gifts in order to assist the ministry team. This would require some working knowledge and understanding of the types of spiritual gifts.

Because of the uniqueness of every individual the way in which that person can serve is just as unique. One youth minister expressed that, "God took his personal desires then fueled them for His glory." Many times the spiritual giftedness of an individual would come alongside the personality or healthy desires of a person and intensify them. Youth ministers would do well to note the strengths and weaknesses of themselves and their team in order to better discern the ways in which one may be gifted.

Research Applications

This section of the research will present ways which the outcomes of the research can be applied to the youth minister who desires to remain youth ministry long-term. The research can only present its findings, the youth minister must take these results and apply them to their individual situations.

The Youth Minister and His Team

"Youth ministry, like other ministry, requires a team" (Patty 2005, 212). The population in this study has overwhelmingly shown that their youth ministry teams have played a vital role in their longevity, particularly at their current church. The idea of attempting youth ministry without such a team in place is foreign. Therefore, those who feel like God has called them to youth ministry must be ready to not only minister to the needs of students but to build an effective team of volunteers through which to minister. Parents, older adults, college students, and other adults in the church all with their own life experiences, can comprise an effective leadership team. This team should be created

expectantly. "Build a team so that when God opens the door and expands your ministry, you'll have the staff to shepherd every student" (Patty 2005, 212). The team, then, is not an end to itself, rather, it is established to generate greater effectiveness in reaching students. "We should be busy mobilizing people to touch the lives of youth for Christ" (Black 1991, 51). The youth minister should also be prepared to spend the time it takes to build such a team. While it may seem rather unusual for the youth minister to spend so much time with adults, it must be seen as an investment into the group and time well spent as the team ministers to the youth and their families.

The youth minister as team builder and leader also has the responsibility to affirm and encourage his team. This helps build confidence among the members of the team making them more proficient.

People are in process. A good team builder appreciates and affirms people on the journey. People without experience may fail in early attempts. If they sense failure isn't tolerated, they won't try again. Their self-image may also be rooted in success and so when their work isn't perfect, they feel they've failed. Leaders who inspire others affirm people in process and remind them of their progress. (Patty 2005, 214)

Youth ministers would do well to remember the mistakes that were made as they started in ministry and the ability they had to make mistakes. Or if a former pastor was not very gracious with the youth minister as he made mistakes, it is the opportunity to show the youth worker the consideration and affirmation that was not shown to the youth minister.

As the team is being built, the youth minister must learn the art of delegation in giving away responsibilities and tasks that the team or its individuals can accomplish. The whole premise of the team is to multiply the efforts and focus of the youth minister. This

being true, the team should be ready and available to pursue any given task the youth minister feels they can handle.

When you ask someone to do a job, you must give them freedom to work. Give clear direction and boundaries and then release the person to do the job in her own unique way. Micromanaging or controlling every detail robs personal motivation. Great leaders exercise confidence in people to release them to ministry. They encourage innovation and creativity. (Patty 2005, 214).

In fact, to build a team of youth volunteers and then not release them and give them the freedom to work is self-defeating. The team members would more than likely become discouraged and find another area of ministry or drop out altogether. The total youth program would suffer under this scenario and team members would not know the impact each of them could have within the group. As youth ministers continue to realize the importance of the ministry team, they should also be ready to put their team in the spotlight and give them credit for the amount of effective ministry they produce. Not only does longevity of the youth minister at one church become a phenomenon, but the longevity of the entire youth ministry team as well. "A dozen of us have done youth ministry together for more than a decade. This team is the reason our students are growing in Christ. Our staffers are godly, mature, and invested in students' lives for the long haul" (Patty 2005, 217-218).

The youth minister who is building a team should acknowledge that not only is he part of the youth ministry team, but also a member of the pastoral staff team of the church. Each pastoral staff position has its own responsibilities and duties, which, when put together, comprise the work of the church. "The youth minister is first and foremost a minister rather than a director of youth activities. This calls for a desire to work alongside

other staff members to avoid competition, petty jealousies, and overemphasis in some area of church work” (Black 1991, 46-47).

Recruiting and training.

Proper recruiting and training of the youth ministry team is crucial to its health and effectiveness. The population sample greatly emphasized the importance of proper recruiting and ongoing training of the team. A wise youth minister who is looking to build a solid team of committed youth workers will pray for God’s guidance and timing of bringing the team together. As he continues to pray for prospective team members, he should be ready to talk with individuals who are interested in serving in youth ministry. “Don’t give a blanket invitation from the pulpit or church newsletter asking for volunteers. Have a job description, a selection and screening process, and clearly stated expressions for staff in place before you invite people to apply” (Patty 2005, 216). Being intentional in the recruiting and enlistment process will also convey to those interested that the youth ministry program is looking for specific individuals who are called to serve students. Job descriptions should reflect this intentionality and purpose of the youth program. “Have specific jobs with structure and clear responsibility. A lay staff person with undefined responsibilities may offer to speak in situations for which they aren’t trained or volunteer to work in areas outside of their gifting. Staff without clear structure can be loose cannons, rolling around the deck at the worst moments” (Patty 2005, 216). The youth minister who uses specific job descriptions and responsibilities also knows what he can expect from the adult volunteer. The volunteer, in return, can be sure of what

is expected which helps in managing individual preparation time for teaching or a particular activity.

Training and ministering to team members can be one of the most rewarding aspects of youth ministry. While some workers may be more experienced than others, all of them require ongoing training. “Good youth staff members are shepherds, not chaperones. In order to shepherd, whether it’s leading a Bible study, a small group, a discussion, or an activity, the average layperson needs regular training” (Patty 2005, 219). One aspect of this training is in helping the worker discover their spiritual gift in order to help them be more effective individually and as a member of the team. A potential youth worker may approach the youth minister with nothing more than the desire to serve. “Help people discover their gifts, abilities, and limits. Many people have a heart for ministry but lack the skills or understanding of what needs to happen. Because of this they can’t contribute all God designed them to be” (Patty 2005, 216). One of the goals of the youth ministry team should be to pursue their full potential, both as a team player and individually. Youth workers that discover their spiritual gifts and strive to use them become more efficient individuals, thereby strengthening the team and the youth program as a whole. As the team leader, this responsibility falls to the youth minister. “It is the task of the youth minister to help people discover their spiritual gifts and find places of expression for those gifts” (Black 1991, 51).

The youth ministry team is also a place and opportunity for the youth minister to serve those team members and their families. Duffy Robbins commented, “One of the most important tasks of leaders is to be servants of the teams they lead. However busy we are with public programs and urgent tasks, ministering to the team is one thing we cannot

neglect. I see the tasks of praying for the teams I lead, spending relaxed time with them, and ministering to them as one of the most important features of my job description” (Robbins 2004, 77).

Leadership in Youth Ministry

Leading by example was one way some in the population sample expressed their approach to leadership. In this, the youth minister effectively shows his team and the group how to live out the very things he teaches and asks of others. This also conveys to others that the youth minister, though the leader, does not think any task is beneath him. “Do any job that needs to be done. Your willingness to serve wherever needed teaches by example” (Patty 2005, 214). This, however, does not imply that the youth minister must do every job that comes his way, but that he is willing to do so. The youth minister as team leader should be active in his approach to servant leadership. Even as the coach model of leadership implies activity and involvement with his team.

Good coaches engage quickly and fully. Their spirit is hopeful and expectant, full of confidence that the player has the capability to change and convinced that change will benefit the player. What makes engagement effective is the absence of judgment, guilt, doubt, or condemnation. The coach engages with openness and optimism that believes the best and looks forward to positive results. (Patty 2005, 229)

The youth minister as coach will set forth a strategy to win, or succeed, through having the best people in the right positions. Due to their personal desire to be the most effective, these individuals have become the best in their positions and because they received effective training from the coach.

Even the pastor-shepherd leadership style conveys this idea of leading by example. “The shepherd-leader will have to lead by instruction and example in these

areas for the sake of his young flock's development" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 237). This, again, is not a leadership style that is distanced from the team and group, rather it requires personal contact and familiarity with the flock. "A shepherd-leader of young people must be able to call his young people by name, or, at the very least, someone who is a part of the ministry team knows and calls them by name" (Vukich and Vandegriff 2002, 236).

The Youth Minister's Calling

The youth minister can take comfort in knowing that God specifically calls individuals to a lifetime of youth ministry. This area of ministry is no less significant than the pastor of a church. It is important for the youth minister to know and understand his calling to youth ministry, doing so will serve to encourage the minister in times of conflict and give him the confidence he needs to maintain his position unwavering. Doubting one's call can quickly lead to a lack of self-confidence and confusion in understanding God's call on his life and purpose. "Self-doubt will rob you of emotional and spiritual energy to do the work God wants you to accomplish. Therefore, I suggest that you take the time periodically to trace the steps that brought you to your current position so you can see and remember God's hand in the process" (Patty 2005, 286). As the youth minister revisits this process, resolve and encouragement should be the outcome. This process and retracing of a call to ministry may occur many times within the vocation of the youth minister. This by no means should be perceived by the youth minister as insecurity on their part, rather, God is looking to affirm and encourage them in light of a current or future struggle.

Let the issue be settled. You were led to this position by the sovereign hand of the living, personal God. You're it. You're the leader. By God's providence and grace you're the leader, so get on with leading and serving God's people. The strength and grace that got you to the position will not abandon you in it. (Patty 2005, 286-287)

Given time, by casual observation, every youth minister will need to revisit their call to ministry. If one has not had need to do so, it would still be wise to have a plan of what to do when an opportunity to move or change ministry positions presents itself. "Whether you're a veteran youth worker or a newcomer, I encourage you to revisit this process of reviewing God's leading in your life throughout your lifetime. You may not question your calling (God's leading) now, but you may in the future or you may face a decision to go another direction in ministry" (Patty 2005, 287).

Confidence in your calling also projects stability and confidence to the ministry team. When the team perceives surety from the leader, they too will convey this confidence to the group. "Knowing who you are in Christ, confident of your calling and direction in ministry, is attractive to emerging leaders. An insecure leader lacks the confidence to give significant responsibility to others, fearing that failure may reflect poorly on himself" (Patty 2005, 213).

The Youth Minister's Personal Walk

The minister's relationship with God through Jesus must be of the utmost importance and it must be guarded. There will be many distractions that will inevitably come and try to pull the youth minister away from his work and desire in ministry. Sometimes ministry itself can be a distraction when the minister finds himself only going through monotonous daily routines without passion for ministry or seeing the ministry opportunities that present themselves. In order to have a more effective ministry, the

leader must abide in Christ. “If you walk with the Lord Jesus, you will have a ministry in the lives of others. If you live in obedience to the truth you possess, you will minister to others” (Patty 2005, 285). Consequently, effective youth ministry and a dynamic ministry team is reflective of a youth minister’s personal walk. The health of the relationships a youth minister has is a result of a foundational consequence in his personal walk and relationship with Christ. “Since ministry is highly relational, the personal spiritual health of a youth minister is most clearly seen within the context of relationships” (Patty 2005, 287).

Within the context of youth ministry this walk can best be defined as servant leadership. The youth minister serves and leads his team through a lifestyle of service to Christ. “Christian leadership means being bound to God in service and love – willing to serve Him as He sees fit. This service is expressed in loving ways to believers and unbelievers in order to convey the message of God’s love for the world” (Black 1991, 21).

Further Research

Based on the approach and focus of this research, one might choose a number of other issues to study and investigate. This study could be broadened to include all staff members and how long an entire staff has been together in ministry and what factors have led to this phenomenon. This could be helpful for pastors who want to build a ministry team and keep staff together long-term.

Another possible way in which this study could be used is by focusing on volunteer youth workers who have been in youth ministry for extended periods. As a

youth minister this would be helpful to know what keeps a youth worker happy and committed, particularly when it comes to building a team for ministry. These individuals who are called to youth ministry but have other vocations are a unique breed in giving of their time and energy to see young people come to know Christ.

Further research could be pursued regarding job satisfaction of those in vocational ministry in relationship to those with secular careers. This study showed the average tenure of a long-term youth minister is 17.4 years. Is this number reflective of other work force vocations? Job satisfaction could be measured between ministers and secular vocations based on purpose and fulfillment in life.

Meaningful research in the area of retired ministers could also be pursued. This area of study could focus on a sample of retired ministers, their lives in ministry, and ministry since retirement. Understanding the positions each of them held and the calling they followed to each position would be helpful in training other ministers as they also follow God's call on their lives. It would be a matter of interest to see if, in fact, there is a pattern of their positions in ministry.

Other research could be done in the area of tracing trends and movements of ministerial students from one seminary to another as they follow their specific calling in ministry. For example, this study showed that years ago Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was a major influence on those who have achieved extended tenure in their places of ministry. Would this be true today or would another seminary, such as New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, be the place youth ministry students attend? Incoming students could be surveyed as to their reason for choosing their respective seminary.

Still, further research could be pursued in the area of a seminary's program to see if the institution places an emphasis on holistic training of ministers. Are they being trained to go to a place of serving in ministry and staying for an extended length of time? This evaluation of a seminary's program would be beneficial to the institution itself to see if its students are being wholly prepared to go and be committed to a church.

Several responses from the youth ministers in this study mentioned the support of their families. Additional research could be conducted focusing on the families of long-time ministers. The family members perception of ministry and the church would be valuable for those going into ministry. It would also be helpful to new spouses of ministers as to what they might be able to expect having a spouse in ministry.

Further study could be conducted on the reasons for a minister's departure from his last position or positions. Tracking these moves could show a pattern of tendency of the minister(s) and may help ascertain whether or not an individual is fully prepared to pursue his calling. Seminaries and other learning institutions could also utilize the information in able to better prepare its graduates for ministry beyond the doors of the seminary.

While mentoring and accountability are key words that are used in churches and learning institutions, the reality of whether or not those are being practiced could be pursued for further research. Pastors and other ministerial staff could be surveyed to discover if, in fact, they have been mentored, are currently being mentored, and/or mentoring someone else. To be in a position of such great responsibility, such as the pastor of a church or any other ministerial staff, without accountability is dangerous for

the individual and those under their care. Discovering successful mentoring and accountability in churches could provide a model for those desiring it in their own lives.

Further research could be done to discover what the average length of stay is for youth ministers. This could be done by denomination, city or urban setting, male or female, etc. It has been difficult to grasp an undisputed number of years, or months, youth ministers have been in their position before moving to another church or position. Knowing this statistic could assist those who teach and help prove, or disprove, some assumptions regarding youth ministers.

Additional research could be pursued in the area of which state places the most emphasis on an area of ministry, such as youth ministry. A state convention's programs, conferences, and the way in which it supports youth ministers could be measured. Youth ministers within the state could be surveyed as to how well they feel they are being supported, equipped, and communicated with by its state convention. A study of this type could give state conventions a comprehensive look at why it may or may not be achieving its desired goals in an area of ministry.

Further research in the area of practical training to better prepare youth ministers for the reality of being on a staff and leading a ministry team and its program. A study of youth ministers a year out of seminary to investigate their confidence and competency in some practical areas of ministry to see if their seminary training realistically prepared them for their current position and responsibilities. Some areas of focus could be preparing and working with a budget, handling difficult situations with parents and students, how to interview with a church, developing a complete youth

program instead of planning event to event, and a holistic approach to youth ministry as it involves families and the church.

Finally, additional research could be pursued in focusing on leadership teams. While this study brought out some aspects of successful ministry teams, it did not, by design, focus solely on those teams, rather it targeted the leader of the team. A study based on the leadership team's perception of setting goals and pursuing them, working as a team, and even the perception of the team's leader would be beneficial. This would give a firsthand account of team members as they work out their call to ministry with one another and under the leadership of a staff minister.

APPENDIX 1

My name is Rusty Wheelington and I am in the last months (hopefully!) of working on my doctorate in church leadership and Christian education through Southern Seminary's Ed.D. program. My dissertation, *The Longevity of Youth Ministers in Relationship to Personal Characteristics and Leadership Techniques*, will focus on the phenomenon of youth ministers who have extended tenures of fifteen years or more in their current position. Having seen and heard the pattern of alarming statistics regarding tenure of youth ministers, I know the youth ministers who fit this study's profile are a rare breed. I believe, however, that generations of youth ministers can learn from them what it takes to not simply survive in youth ministry, but strive, thereby, strengthening the church's ministry to families and community.

I am calling to ask for your assistance in finding youth ministers who have been in their current positions for fifteen years or longer.

I know you are busy and I appreciate your time. Please let me know if I can be of assistance to you in any way.

Rusty Wheelington
Minister of Students and Missions
rustywheelington@hotmail.com
Bartlett Hills Baptist Church (901) 386-9763

APPENDIX 2

Longevity and Leadership Technique Survey

Demographics

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Church:

Years at current church:

What is the approximate size of your youth group?

Education:

University/College

Degree

Seminary

Degree

Post Graduate

Degree

Longevity

1. To what do you attribute your longevity in youth ministry?
2. How can the reality of longevity in youth ministry be achieved?
3. What do you feel should be taught at the university and seminary level regarding longevity?
4. What is your greatest joy from having an extended tenure?

Leadership Technique

1. Based on your expertise, what are some key elements of leadership?
2. What do you see as your personal leadership style?
3. In your opinion, has your leadership style contributed to your longevity in ministry? If so, how?
4. Describe your youth ministry team and its function.
5. Are there ways in which you train and develop your youth ministry team? If so, what are they?
6. How do you develop student leaders in your youth group?

Call to Ministry

1. Briefly describe your call to ministry.
2. How did you know you were specifically called to youth ministry?
3. How was your call affirmed?
4. What do you feel is a misconception regarding the call to ministry?

Spiritual Giftedness

1. From the list and definitions given, indicate your primary spiritual gift:

_____ The gift of Prophecy - "The gift of prophecy does not involve new revelation but a clearer understanding or amplification of already-given truth. The gift of prophecy makes the Word of God relevant to a particular situation in a current context" (Flynn 1974, 60).

_____ The gift of Evangelism - "Though all believers are to witness, the gift of evangelism is a special ability in communicating the Gospel message in relevant terms to unbelievers" (Flynn 1974, 66).

_____ The gift of Shepherding - Given for the guiding, feeding, and guarding of fellow-believers (Flynn 1974).

_____ The gift of Teaching - "The supernatural ability to explain clearly and apply effectively the truth of the Word of God" (Flynn 1974, 85).

_____ The gift of Exhortation - "The gift of exhortation involves the supernatural ability to come alongside to help, to strengthen the weak, reassure the wavering, buttress the buffeted, steady the faltering, console the troubled, encourage the halting. Just as the Holy Spirit is an instrument of help, so the Spirit uses this gift to make us instruments of encouragement to fellow saints" (Flynn 1974, 94).

_____ The gift of Knowledge - "The charisma which enables the believer to search, systematize, and summarize the teachings of the Word of God. Through it, the Christian is enabled to acquire deep insight into divine truth. This supernatural ability brings illumination of God's thoughts not discoverable by human reason" (Flynn 1974, 102-103).

_____ The gift of Wisdom - "The ability to apply knowledge to vexing situations, to weigh their true nature, to exercise spiritual insight into the rightness or wrongness of a complex state of affairs" (Flynn 1974, 104).

_____ The gift of Helps/Ministering - "The Spirit-given ability to serve the church in any supporting role, usually temporal, though sometimes spiritual. The gift enables one to serve joyfully and diligently wherever and whenever needed" (Flynn 1974, 114).

_____ The gift of Government/Leadership - "The Spirit-given ability to preside, govern, plan, organize, and administer with wisdom, fairness, example, humility, service, confidence, ease, and efficiency" (Flynn 1974, 143).

_____ The gift of Showing Mercy - "The Spirit-guided ability to manifest practical, compassionate, cheerful love toward suffering members of the body of Christ" (Flynn 1974, 148).

_____ The gift of Faith - "A Spirit-given ability to see something that God wants done and to sustain unwavering confidence that God will do it regardless of seemingly insurmountable obstacles" (Flynn 1974, 157).

_____ The gift of Discernment - "A person with the gift of discernment can discriminate between that which is raised up by God and that which pretends to be. He has the ability to unmask Satan's trickery, to detect false teachings, and to ferret out false teachers. He has the ability to spot a phony before others see through his phoniness" (Flynn 1974, 170).

2. How are your spiritual gift(s) affirmed in your ministry?

3. Have your spiritual gift(s) changed during your tenure in ministry? If so, explain?

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ABSTRACT

THE LONGEVITY OF YOUTH MINISTERS IN RELATIONSHIP TO PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES

Russell Neal Wheelington, Ed.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005
Chairperson: Dr. Brian C. Richardson

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extended tenures of youth ministers, their common characteristics, as well as, their leadership techniques. The researcher defined expert, leadership techniques, longevity, organizational climate factors, spiritual gifts, and youth minister.

This research addressed and presented theoretical foundations based on the youth minister and spiritual gifts, leadership techniques of youth ministers, the call to ministry, youth ministry, and thriving in youth ministry. It also discussed the importance of having the trust of youth and parents which can come through tenure.

The subjects of this study were youth ministers who have been in their current positions for ten years or more. These ministers have held the title and position of youth minister for the duration of this time. The sample of youth ministers were given a survey in which their expertise will be conveyed. After compiling the responses, the researcher returned to three of the youth ministers for more insight into the results of the survey.

The study presented these results with charts and tables along with explanation of each. Personal characteristics, spiritual giftedness, leadership techniques,

call to ministry, organizational climate factors, as well as, the nature of the relationship between these topics are presented.

Once the information was compiled and displayed the researcher drew conclusions to longevity in ministry and leadership techniques of youth ministers with extended tenures. Ways in which the results of the research can be applied and implemented into churches and institutions to help youth ministers know what to expect if they are going to remain in youth ministry long-term will also be addressed. Further research into spiritual giftedness, leadership techniques, ministerial calling, and extended tenure is encouraged.

keywords: longevity in youth ministry, leadership techniques, call to youth ministry, spiritual gifts.

VITA

Russell Neal Wheelington

PERSONAL

Born: June 13, 1967, Texarkana, Texas
Parents: Mary Ann Wheelington and LeRoy Wheelington
Married: Laurie Leah Basham, August 4, 1990
Children: Caleb Neal, born September 25, 2001
Nathan Truett, born July 18, 2003

EDUCATION

Associates of Applied Arts in Visual Communications
Art Institute of Dallas, 1989
Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Art and Pastoral Ministries
Dallas Baptist University, 1994
Master of Arts in Religious Education
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996

MINISTRY

Minister of Youth, High Pointe Baptist Church
Cedar Hill, Texas, 1992-1996
Minister of Students and Missions, Bartlett Hills Baptist Church
Bartlett, Tennessee, 1997-