

Ken Moser 2012 Session 3

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[0 : 00] I've just written a paper that is going to go on the Youth Surge website. I hope that you know that there's a Youth Surge website. It's called youthsurge.com.au. I have a website in America called effectivemethod.com.

It's not effectivemethod.com. Be careful. They're the speed water into a bucket guys and smack each other with all the newspaper. Effectivemethod.com, where I every week just post youth ministry thoughts.

They're designed for the leadership team to download, read, and discuss. And there's going to be a long paper. I'm giving it in Melbourne at this conference on, you know, do we think pragmatically in youth ministry or do we think theologically?

And so you've got to really think through that because the Americans are pragmatists. The Americans say, how do we get kids in the door? That's what they think.

That's not a theological way to think. It's not an Australian way to think. We want to think, what does God want us to do? That's way more important. So let's think theologically.

[1 : 02] Let's think with our Bibles open. Now, if this was a 40-hour class, we'd spend a whole bunch of time in the Bible. And so, unfortunately, I've got to rush through some really good God stuff, which is frustrating for all of us.

But here is a key passage. To me, this is a central passage in thinking through youth ministry. It's well known. 1 Corinthians 3.

And God says here, Paul says here, By the grace God gives me, I laid a foundation as an expert building in somebody else's building. Paul goes to Corinth.

He does evangelism. People become Christians and he leaves. So he was the expert builder. And he built this church.

And he says, But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. So it's all about Jesus. That's why we're doing it. You're preaching Jesus, teaching Jesus, helping people to love Jesus, helping people to love each other because of Jesus.

[2 : 09] The whole thing is about Jesus. If any man builds on this foundation, he's in gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, and straw. His work will be shown for what it is because the day will bring it to light.

You're building a house. Paul says you've got two piles. Gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, and straw. Now be clear on this. In that culture, you are not going to build a house with gold, silver, costly stones.

It's absurd. You're going to build a house with wood, hay, or straw. Like today. And so Paul says be careful because there's some really obvious stuff to build with and it's the wrong stuff.

There's other stuff to build that you may not even occur to you to build with. But that's what you're going to build with because you're actually building a temple. And you don't build a temple with just straw.

You build a temple with gold. And so he says, if anything builds on this foundation with these things, his work will be shown. The day will bring it to light. That's the day of judgment. It will be revealed with fire.

[3 : 15] And the fire will test the quality of each man's work. So God is going to send the judgment fires on our youth ministries. So I was with these two awesome ladies for six years at Oakhurst.

Just a tremendous blessing in my life. I learned so much about youth ministry at Oakhurst. It was the most fruitful time in my life for thinking and writing and strategizing for all sorts of great reasons.

And I'm obviously a lot older than them. And I'm going to die. I'm going to go to heaven. And I think what this passage is saying is that in some weird way, God is going to bring my youth group to heaven.

And in my judgment, I'm going to be surrounded by these youth group kids. Lonnie's going to be there. Siara's going to be there. I don't know how it's going to work. It's kind of weird. But suddenly God is going to test them.

And if they stand, I stand. If they are burned up, I suffer loss. Verse 15. He's going to test the quality of each man's work.

[4 : 27] If what he's built survives, he receives reward. If it's burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. I'm going to go to heaven no matter what because I trust in Jesus.

Jesus has taken my sins. But if I've run this youth group called, you know, Spew Squad, and we've just covered ourselves with marshmallows every week, and we've done weird things with toothpicks.

By the way, if it involves a toothpick, you don't do it in youth ministry. It's a rule. Eggs, shaving cream, toothpicks at all costs. We try to toothpick thing in youth group.

Even though we've been in youth ministry 30 years, just a few months ago, it was dreadful. And that was the same night we tried memory verse tennis, where you had to hit and say the memory verse. We thought it was such a good idea.

You know when it's death from the minute the activity starts? And we're like, oh, this is awful. So even in 30 years, we still get it wrong. Anyway, I'll still be saved, but only there's one escaping.

[5 : 29] Now this passage, man, it revolves on those nine words. Two, four, six, eight, nine. Be careful. Be careful.

When you buy a youth ministry book, be careful. When you read my stuff, be careful. When you put a program together, be careful.

Because you are building on Jesus, you're building God's temple. Are you using gold? So here's one simple barometer for your youth group.

Something I've learned in a long time. Does your youth group pray? If your youth group prays, that's a really good barometer for your youth ministry. If I come to your youth group, and you open with prayer, and there's a prayer time involved, and when the leader says, hey guys, we're going to pray, what can we pray for?

And kids say, could we pray for whatever? That is a real sign of health. And that says to me that there's a real serious building with gold here.

[6 : 36] When you say to your youth group, okay, grab your Bibles. So I was at the youth group here last night, and one of the leaders who's here said, okay, everybody get a Bible. What did the kids do? They all went and got a Bible. Okay, we're going to turn to Mark 14.

They open up to Mark 14. That is a real sign of gold being woven and built, and this program is just, oh, I think, fantastic. That's a healthy barometer.

When do the kids groan? Oh, that's a real indicator that something's, okay, we're going to play a game now if they go, oh, they're saying something.

Or if you say, hey, we're going to have a prayer time now and if the kids go, oh, we want to keep playing the game, that's a real sign. So Paul says, build with gold.

Build with gold. Now here's another one. This to me is just a fantastic passage. You know it. It's a real famous passage. It's at the end of Acts 2.

[7 : 36] Luke, the historian, gives us kind of a summary passage. He does it a few times in the book of Acts. And he says, just to sum up this wacko, amazing, fantastic time in the early church where there was Pentecost and all this outpouring of the Holy Spirit and thousands of people became Christians and it was just amazing.

He sums it up by saying, this stuff. Template. You are looking at a template for youth ministry. Right there. Notice what they were.

They were devoted to Bible study. They were devoted to fellowship. The word there is koinonia or koinonia. We have cheapened the word fellowship in youth ministry.

We have, what people do culturally is they take a really good word and they hijack it. The word gay, it's a really good word. Like it's rich in meaning but you can't say it anymore.

It's been twisted. And we've done a similar thing with fellowship. We call things fellowship that aren't fellowship. Fellowship is relating to a person because of the cross of Christ.

[8 : 45] So I am deep friends with Ciara not because we just connect and we like the same stuff and we just personality-wise get along. That's true. But it's because of the cross of Christ.

I relate to her through Jesus which means much more deep. I'm going to care for her. I'm going to love her. I'm going to be with her, mourn when she's mourning, rejoice when she's rejoicing.

I'm going to admonish her. I'm going to rebuke her. I'm going to warn her. I'm going to study the Bible with her. It's this awesome term. That's fellowship. That's what they were devoted to. They were devoted to possibly communion, possibly meals.

People disagree. And they were devoted to prayer. Wow, what a great youth group image right there. Everybody looks in and says, woo, amazing. And the apostles were doing great stuff.

People getting healed. They spent a lot of time together. Notice that in verse 44. They had a lot of commonality together. People kind of wrestle with that. What does it mean? Does it mean physical stuff?

[9 : 46] Does it mean attitudinally? Does it mean doctrinally? I think it means they were thinking of one mind and spirit. And they, verse 45, they shared their stuff.

Generosity. They met a lot. Verse 46. Big group, small group. Big group in the temple courts, small group eating together in the homes.

They spent a lot of time praising God. People looked in and said, you guys are awesome right here. And they grew. Amazing passage. Amazing passage.

And so I look at that and I say, okay, that informs my thinking in what I want to do. That is a list of activities. It's not a list of doctrines.

I must believe that Jesus is X. That's really good. I love doctrine. I'm a doctrine guy. But this is a list of activities. So I read that and I think, okay, if I do that, I'm building with gold. And I want to think theologically.

[10 : 46] And I want to take those activities and put them into place in my youth group. And so how do I do that? That's the question. That's where we're going right now. So I'm going to build my youth program on three pillars.

So those of you who need a model of youth ministry, here it comes. For those of you who know my stuff, this is a little bit, I'm taking build, reach, and flow.

If you don't know what I'm talking about, don't worry about it. I'm taking build, reach, and flow and I'm trying to work it a little bit, make it a little bit thicker. So build, reach, and flow fits into this. We're not going to talk much about build, reach, and flow today.

You can read about it. But I want to build my house on three pillars. And this is real obvious stuff, but I'm telling you, the more I think about it, I think it changes everything.

I think it changes everything. Our pillar number one is we're a Christian youth group. When I came to Australia, I immediately fell in love with Australia. It changed my life.

[11 : 48] But I didn't get Australia. I didn't get Australia until I got cricket. I won't bore you with the story, but it was during beach mission season.

All my friends had gone. I was going so insane that I turned on Channel 9 and watched the cricket. For an American, that's insanity. And over the course of five days, and a lot of phone calls, what's a Googly, what's a Yorker, you know, everything opened up.

I understood so much about Australia that just led to a whole bunch of thinking and led to quite a deep desire for me to become an Australian. Now I'm trying to wrestle with hockey.

Hockey's a really weird sport. I don't get it. Like, you lose your teeth when you play. It just seems like, welcome to the hockey team, you won't be needing those anymore.

LAUGHTER But our college has a gym. It's in a balcony. I'm doing the elliptical because I'm really not good at anything else these days.

[13 : 02] If it involves a heavy object, forget it. So I just do this. Woo! And I watch the hockey because every institution in Australia has to have a hockey rink, in Canada, has to have a hockey rink.

So I'm watching hockey. And then there'll be a hockey match. And I'm watching the parents. And I'm watching the coach. Now I don't know if you know hockey.

I never knew this. But the team doesn't stay out for longer than 90 seconds. So you have four guys race out. And it's so fast that they hyperventilate.

And they come back in and four more guys goes out. And they have four sets of four guys. Is that right, Josh? It's four sets. Five sets of four guys. Four sets of five guys. Four sets of five guys. Who go out.

And I never pick that up. And so I'm watching it. Now what I'm watching is a brutal, sweaty, hard sport. That's what I'm watching. And the parents are into it.

[13 : 58] And the kids, they sit in this bench thing right next to the ice. And they just lean up. And whenever something good happens, they pound on the thing. Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. And they're eager to go out. And I think, here's a group of young people who are really committed to something that's sweaty, uncomfortable, toothless.

Other parts of your anatomy will take a puck. And so it's like, oh, this is bizarre. So I think, okay. I have a nephew. I take my nephew to hockey.

And I say, hello, hockey coach. My nephew's a little bit interested in hockey. Hockey coach says, great. We'd love to have him. And I say, yeah, but I don't think he wants to afford hockey.

I don't know. I think he's a bit scared. Could you play some games that don't have anything to do with hockey to kind of ease them into hockey? Like, could you play Honey, If You Love Me, Smile? Even though I know you guys can't smile.

What would the coach do? What would the coach do if I said to him, can you do things other than hockey to be attractive to the non-hockey player?

[15 : 12] It is an unknown concept to hockey players. Now, I hope you're tracking with me because this is super important. Think glee club. Don't think glee club. Think chess club.

By the way, you know that glee clubs sing glees? That's why they're called glee clubs. I never knew that. Anyway, it comes from the 1700s. If I go to a chess club, which, by the way, you will never see me in a chess club.

I'm not knocking those of you who are in chess clubs. I'm just... But if I go to a chess club, I'm not going to expect to do a lot of things other than play chess, get thicker glasses and a calculator in my front pocket.

Just joking. I'm going to expect to play chess. If a chess club wants to grow numerically, what are they going to do? They're going to play chess.

It wouldn't even occur to them to say, let's do non-chess activities to grow. Wouldn't even occur to them. Okay, let's keep going. So what I want to think through is we're a Christian group.

[16 : 15] That is who we are. We are unashamedly marked by our love for Jesus Christ. There will be people who don't want to join us. There were people who didn't want to follow Jesus.

There were people that Jesus healed that didn't follow Jesus. It's mind-boggling. I can't figure that out. Why would you not want to follow Jesus? Didn't want to.

Didn't want to. And so there's going to be a whole market share that just quite frankly doesn't want to be Christian, doesn't want to follow us. But we are going to be a Christian youth group. And that's going to be what marks us.

It's going to be really, really obvious. That's our first pillar. And there's a whole bunch of Bible passages we can look at, but we looked at this 2 Peter one we kind of looked at a few minutes ago. That's who we are.

And one really weird turn the church did was to follow Willow Creek and go down the Seeker Sensitive Mall. That was such a weird, for those of you who are a bit older, that was such a weird turn for us to do.

[17 : 16] We're going to start doing non-Christian activities to attract non-Christians. Doesn't make any sense. And Willow Creek, as many of you know, has now said, we don't do that anymore. And so we need to be saying, well, we never did.

So we need to be following along with it. So that's our first pillar. Hockey group, glee club, choir, chess group, Christian youth group.

And in this new post-millennial world where kids clearly want integrity and transparency and they want to know what will I get if I join this?

What is this all about? Because I'm so busy and I've got so many good options that I need to figure out whether this is a valid thing for me to give my time and my money to.

That's our strength. It's not our weakness. Our strength is to say, we are a place that will connect you with the creator of the universe. And we are a place that just knows Jesus intimately and loves him.

[18 : 18] Oh, where did that come from? Okay, now we have a second pillar. And our second pillar is this. We do Christian things.

Real obvious. Why do we do Christian things? Because we're Christian youth group. That's why. You come to this club, to this group, we are unashamedly Christian.

And we pursue spiritual disciplines. Now for those of you who are kind of like to think a bit deeper, I'm really wrestling with some terms.

And I think where I'm going in the future is pillar number one is ontos. It's who we are. Pillar number two is pneumatikos. We are spiritual. And that means we do spiritual things.

And pillar three, which we're going to get to in a minute, is praxis. We think about how we do it in a culture. So I'm working on something right now that may have that in it.

[19 : 18] But we pray. We send it to the Bible. We worship. Now we have a third pillar. Third pillar is we do it with youth. Now that is the model I think we need to think very carefully about.

We do this with youth. youth. They are 15 years old. They are 12 years old. They are 20 years old. However age they are, what does it mean to be a Christian group and do Christian things with them?

So we're going to think about culture. We're going to think about how do we fit this in to culture? What's the best time to do this in culture?

What are some activities? So now we have to factor in cell phones. We're going to do an activity this afternoon that would really easily run with cell phones. I hate cell phones. I don't have a cell phone.

I never text. I haven't texted for years and years and years. But I could see building texting into your youth program. I can also see making them put their phones away in the youth group program.

[20 : 22] But if your culture would be offended if you said okay all cell phones go into that basket. We'll give them back to you at the end of the night. I could see a culture where the kids just say I am not coming if you do that.

So how do we build in cell phones? Well you guys are way ahead of me because you're a lot younger than I am. And you think savvy. So think through texting questions on the board during a Q&A.;

Think through having a leader texting to the kids. Hey are you listening to Ken? This is a great point. Or texting an outline to the talk. Or something along those lines.

Who knows? There's a whole bunch of ways where you could think through how do we build our culture. Julie is going to do an activity with us later on where we built Facebook in to kind of a starting youth group. Julie said to me one day just about six weeks ago hey I think I've got a good kind of mixer kind of opening built on Facebook.

Actually Julie do you mind saying it right now? We'll look at it really briefly this afternoon but do you mind? Okay yeah. But basically 30 minutes before youth group I checked everyone's Facebook profile and wrote them all down.

[21 : 27] And then came to youth group handed out paper and then I went through each one and read out what their line was and they couldn't say it was them and they had to guess what each other's profile was.

And they really loved the fact that everyone knows their profile. And so often young people they put their profile out there they want people to hear it they want people to like it they want people to comment on it.

so they really responded well to we've got to hear what everyone and we even got to interact with you said you had a bad week what happened and the school was very positive.

Yeah. Our youth group where we were at very small we had eight or nine kids and so that was just a really nice because one thing I'm going to say to you later is you want to start the group by saying we're a group.

Like it's really good to be back together. You know we haven't met for a week and so let's kind of catch up and rediscover our groupness. And so the welcome is very important for that.

[22 : 25] So a really nice way just to start the group speaks right to their culture. Those of you who are kind of under 25 this is where you live and breathe and it's brilliant. But this is the third pillar not the first pillar.

So this is not how do we attract kids through gadgetry but it's hey we're a Christian group we do Christian things but we have to factor in culture for crying out loud.

You know it's where we live. We need to factor in learning styles. This is where we in Sydney fail miserably because we we have learned one learning style and to be honest I'm doing it right now where we just speak a long time and kids listen.

That's where my time at the youth group at Oakhurst out in Sydney's west was super profitable. because we had kids who couldn't listen for 10 seconds. We had kids who couldn't read and so suddenly I had to think through okay how do I take a 25 minute message that's exposition it's a Bible passage how do I take that and deliver it in a way that Brendan can grasp.

Brendan is a he was a great person but he was challenged when it came to hearing and listening for 25 minutes.

[23 : 51] So we had to think through very carefully how do we do it bang bang bang very active and so you may need to talk to a school teacher and say to a school teacher listen what do I do what do I do because school teachers are masters at well you want to maybe have three things and you want to have a variety and so you do this and then you do this and then you do this think ah that is great so think through learning skills active learning have you not noticed that most of your kids are medicated to the eyeballs these days they need they need something energy or something something but let's build that into our teaching program let's build it into maybe our prayer times some of you might be wrestling through you know do we have moving prayer for some of you that feels a little uncomfortable but one one aspect of youth ministry that's taken quite a hold in other parts of the world is thinking through stations where you you repent here and you pray for friends there and you thank God for creation there and you that's proven to be very very popular with post-millennials

I can see a number of groups doing it here where there's a movement built in Lonnie who's over here she really liked liturgical dancing she loved that was a private joke sorry we take in adolescent development so if you're running a wider youth group of grade 6 to 12 ouch you know I run a youth group from grade 6 to 12 but ouch you know we've got little Elliot who's just full of beans he's a terrific kid but he's just he's just and then we've got Roy who's in grade 12 who's really wrestling with his future so I've got to think through man how do I do this so I've got to really think creatively about my program it's hard it's hard to do but I want to factor that in because the third pillar is super important now what I'm going to tell you in a few minutes is we're not good at this what we do is we start with some games and we move to the Bible that's what we do that is such there's not a lot of thought that goes into that program but get rid of that this afternoon get rid of that program and rethink so those are those are our three pillars and I want you to notice the movement here the movement is the movement is our theology impacts our practice so there are things that we're not going to do

I'm not I'm going to do I'm going to do very few activities if any that I can't see a high degree of profit from especially theologically does this help the community of God connect with each other better does this help the community of God connect with God better does this activity help us to pray learn the Bible love because I'm theologically driven but if I just think this activity will quote blow off steam it's gone as I was saying to some youth leaders the other day I have never in the history of my youth ministry seen a kid blow off steam if somebody says to you well we do this activity just to let them blow off steam grab their tongue and see how far it will actually come out like in the cartoons kids don't blow off steam kids get more hyped up and so that's a concept that I say not really that's not a category I'm going to think to letting off steam but connecting learning actively those are concepts that I think through now anybody have a question about that anybody have a question or a thought yeah yeah

I'd rather not but sometimes we have to yeah yeah yeah yeah partly that's going to that's going to depend on the structure of some things going on in your youth program do you have do you have small groups where the kids go and join a small group Bible study if I'm a big believer in running a small group network we're going to talk about that in the next session so I'm not going to do a lot of small group activities in the actual main program but it's not a bad thing to do by any stretch of the imagination it's a very good thing to do we just don't need them because we have cell groups that meet at another time I in some situations yes I would split the teaching I don't personally do that but I can see the argument for it okay junior hires Brad's going to take you you're going to do this and the senior hires will stay

I tend not to do that I tend to keep them all together and what I'm going to try to do is pick my median level and it's hard so generally I aim for kind of year 11 year 10 and then I'm going to think through okay I want to make sure that my talk has some interactiveness to it maybe some movement involved and some kind of turn to the person next to you and act this out or I need a few of you to come on up and do this drama as part of my talk or I need here's the white board I want you to really quickly get into groups come up with blah blah blah and write up on the board yada yada yada so I what I'm going to do is what I said a few minutes ago I'm going to try to build in three movements in my talk now I've got to be honest with you I tend to be lazy and that often goes by the wayside to build that in is going to take an extra hour of work on your talk and so for those of you who are volunteers and giving talks that's hard work yeah so if you were finding a medium level in your group do you ever find that the kids

[30 : 07] I know you're saying put all the three stages but do you ever find that the younger like the seven miss out in the 12 miss out yeah yeah good very good question what do you do you know that's that's that's that's why I'm a big believer if you can in having two youth groups junior high senior high I think that's that's that's the best world to do it because then I'm aiming a little bit more for the grade nines and I'm just I'm just saying grade sevens you'll get it and I think we've seen often the grade nines have a bit of a pull for the grade sevens the grade sevens like having the grade nines there that's a bit of so they'll often sit through a talk that's boring and I'll aim a little bit more for the grade twelves but yeah and in my youth group right now this this youth Elliot tremendous kid but quite frankly he can drive some of the grade twelves crazy he gets up all the time and goes to the fridge there's a fridge in our thing and raids the fridge during youth group and it's awesome but it's really awkward yeah I'm a volunteer so I've got so many other things to do but I don't believe in teaching youth ministry not doing youth ministry so

I said to the kids when we were starting the youth group I said hey guys I'd really like to make this grade nine to twelve and they said but what about Doug and I thought fair enough we'll make it seven to twelve because I love Doug and I thought I'm not going to come in and say your friend can't come but it created problems do you have a comment on that at all mind the Canadian kids loved sock puppet memory verses it was just a winner so we might talk about later