



EFFECTIVE **CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**

BUILDING FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS

COURSE INTRODUCTION
Transcript



Congratulations on taking your first step toward practicing Effective Christian Ministry.

WHO WE ARE

We at Y²AM, which is short for Orthodox Christian Youth and Young Adult Ministries, have spent years researching and learning about and experimenting with the best ministry practices out there. Not to mention the individual experience each of our Team members brings to the table from before we started Y²AM in 2013. And the great ministry organizations that we work with, and collaborated with to make this course.

I'm so excited that you're joining me here at Effective Christian Ministry because, honestly, we share something important in common.

We both want to bring more people to Christ.

We're both serious about ministry, about helping to form new generations of Christians: whether we're talking about youth or young adults, or even not so young adults.

We both want to help more people know Jesus Christ and live out their relationship with the Lord in His Church.

A COMMON QUESTION

I see that desire everywhere I go, every time I visit a new community or a new city for a retreat or to give a talk. Because there's one question I get far more than any other question: something that clergy and parents and youth workers alike all ask me:

“How do we keep young people in the Church?”

That question comes from a great place, from a desire to do good and effective ministry. But we have to be honest: that question also comes from a place of anxiety, from a fear about the path that many young people are on.



We all have our own stories. Maybe we've been teaching Sunday School for a while, and see less kids in the program today than when we started. Maybe we lead a young adult group and see far less participants today than there used to be. Maybe we can even look at the kids that we grew up with and see that many of them, perhaps even the overwhelming majority of them, have fallen away from the Church.

I've seen it myself in my own life: in the communities that I've been a part of, and in my own family. And I'm sure you've seen it, too. But these are just individual experiences. It'll help to take a look at some numbers so we can wrap our minds around the true scale of the problem.

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

In 2011, the Barna Group published *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith*. It's an important book that explored some long-term trends in the lives of young American Christians and it gives us some very sobering data.

The authors of *You Lost Me* surveyed young adult Christians, between the ages of 18 and 29, and found that 59% of young Christians report that they've dropped out of attending Church after going regularly. Think about that: roughly 60% of Christians are falling away from the Church as they enter young adulthood despite being connected during their teenage years.

That's both scary and unsustainable.

And, in some Christian traditions, the number who fall away is even higher. Though we lack hard data about the Orthodox Church, for example, in my own life as an Orthodox Christian about 90% of the kids I grew up with have fallen away from the Church.

Kids I went to Sunday School with, spent years in youth group with, who are part of my family: 90% of them have fallen away.

While we don't quite have big picture data in the Orthodox Church, the hard data that we do have suggests that we're struggling with this problem just as



much as other Christian traditions. While 28% of the general American population are younger than 35, a recent study found that only 13% of Orthodox Christians in the United States are under 35. That's really sobering data, and it points to a significant amount of young people that have fallen away from the Church.

These are good people. People who, for a variety of reasons, have disconnected from the life of the Church.

And we should point out that things aren't necessarily rosy for the people who remain engaged with the Church. The Barna Group found that 50% of young adults have, at some point, been significantly frustrated about their faith. That half of young Christians are facing significant challenges to their faith.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

On the one hand, this makes me feel incredibly sad. Yet it also motivates me to do better, to be more effective in sharing the Gospel and helping people to experience God at work in their lives.

Understanding what makes ministry good and effective in helping people know Christ is incredibly important to me, as I know it's important to you. After all, that's why you're here.

We're not here to point our fingers at those who led ministry before. And we're not here to point fingers at ourselves, or blame ourselves for young people falling away from the Church. That's not why we made this course, and I know that's not why you're here.

You're here because, as difficult as this challenge may appear, you have hope. You believe in the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You believe in the sure witness of His Church. You're honest about the challenge and hopeful that the Lord has called us to this particular time and this particular place to do His work.



And I want to assure you that, as sobering as the numbers are, there's some really good news as well.

THE GOOD NEWS

Because, as part of the survey, the Barna Group asked young adults to compare their current level of religious engagement to how active they were at 15 years old. And, perhaps not surprisingly, 57% said they are currently less active than they used to be.

But here's the surprising part, and the good news: only 29% report that they are now less spiritual than they were at 15 years old.

That's a really interesting split, isn't it: young adults are reporting that they're less engaged, but not that they're less spiritual. The problem isn't God, it isn't theology, it isn't the Church in a big picture sense.

The problem is with our ministry: we simply haven't done a very good job of sharing with young people what the Church really is and who God really is. The problem is they're looking, they still describe themselves as spiritual, but we're not giving them what they need.

Our ministry simply hasn't been effective. We, as parents and clergy and ministry workers and Church leadership, haven't been effective in helping people grow into faithful and engaged Christians.

And that's exactly why we created Effective Christian Ministry.

WHY WE MADE THIS COURSE

We made this course because we've learned a lot over the years. We've drawn from the latest data, from cutting edge ministry research, from the nation's leading ministry thinkers. And, yeah, from a lot of trial and error.

We're not here to point fingers or complain about the dominant model of ministry that you'll find out there. We're just here to share what we've learned; not to complain about the past, but to be honest about what hasn't



been working. Not to condemn those who came before us but to build on their work and offer a new way forward for today's ministry work.

We made this course because we've learned something important about ministry over the years. We've struggled, we've made mistakes. And we finally have something that we believe is important to share with you.

WHAT'S IN THE COURSE

This course is made up of three modules, and I want to lay everything out for you before we get started.

In Module I, we're going to explore the key question of why ministry is struggling. Because we can't get clear on a solution if we're not clear about the nature of the problem. So, in Module I, we're going to explore this question from a variety of angles. We're going to start shifting the conversation away from ministry as information to ministry as transformation, transformation that can only happen when we engage in certain practices which we'll cover later in the course.

After working through Module I, we want you to be able to confidently and clearly diagnose the problem of ineffective ministry. Because only then can you start offering a solution.

In Module II, we're going to start drawing a map of ministry: getting clear about where we are, where we need to go, and what's in the way. We're going to draw this map by calling on what we've learned from theology, Scripture, history, philosophy, and psychology. We're going to draw on this wisdom so we can identify where we are on this map, getting clear about the specific needs and questions that shape today's culture and today's people. Then we're going to identify where we need to go, articulating a vision of effective ministry by getting clear on the five needs youth and young adults have in their lives. And finally, we're going to identify what's in our way, the five core challenges that shape modern life and make meeting those needs with contemporary ministry so challenging.



After working through Module II, we want you to be able to understand the current landscape and what's waiting for us in our homes and communities as you prepare to lead the practices of effective Christian ministry.

In Module III, we're going to respond to each of the 5 core challenges that we identified in Module II with the five core practices of effective Christian ministry. Because each of these challenges is an opportunity for real and transformative and effective ministry. We're going to work through exactly what these practices are and how to start implementing them today.

After working through Module III, we want you to be able to begin implementing these practices today; to stop leading ineffective, informational ministry and start leading effective, transformational, Christ-centered, and Kingdom-oriented ministry.

But that's not all. We're also offering a free Bonus Module. It's full of lessons on some important skills that you'll need as you work with young people. You'll continue to have free access to all those new lessons.

There's a lot of great material in Effective Christian Ministry. To help you make the most of it, I'm also inviting you to join our exclusive private Facebook group. In that group you'll be able to connect with us at Y2AM and everyone else who's taken the course so we can dig even deeper into the modules and work through how best to apply the practices of Effective Christian Ministry. You can find a link in your course materials.

AN IMPORTANT SUGGESTION

Before we start, we'd also like to offer an important suggestion. Taking this course is going to challenge your assumptions about ministry, and give you some important work to do. It's hard to undertake something new on your own, so I highly recommend you tell some friends and fellow ministry workers about this course. Maybe it's a clergyman, maybe it's someone in parish leadership, maybe it's a ministry volunteer.



Putting this course into practice will be a lot easier if you're not going it alone.

I'm really grateful that you're here with us and that you're ready and willing to begin this important work. It takes courage to assess the work you're doing. It

takes courage to be open to sharpening your vision, improving your skills, and committing yourselves to a renewed direction in ministry.

I'm grateful for your courage. And I'm grateful you're here with us today.

A PRAYER AS WE GET STARTED

Before we begin, I'd like to pray with you.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for bringing us together in your name. As you called Israel out of the slavery of Egypt to cross the wilderness and enter the Promised Land that you had appointed for them, call us out of the bondage of sin and prepare us to cross the dryness that has left us thirsty for you. Help us to be faithful to the Gospel that you gifted to your disciples and apostles, to be faithful to the wisdom that we have received from the Christians who have preceded us, and to be faithful to you as we prepare to do the work that you have appointed for us. We ask this in your name: together with your beginningless Father and your all-holy good and life-giving Spirit. Amen.

May our time together be blessed. May our work be blessed.

I'll see you soon in Module I.