

Introduction to the Relational Discipleship Kickstart

**A Relational Discipleship
Kickstart Field Guide**

TEN×10

Goal: Get to know the TENx10 Faith Formation Framework and preview the Relational Discipleship Kickstart

**What does a young person need
to have a thriving faith in Jesus?**

Shared
Faith *shared* by adults.

Internalized
Faith *internalized*
through spiritual
practices and learning.

Applied
Faith *applied* through
service and justice.



Catalyzed
Faith *catalyzed* by
family intimacy and
intentionality.

Prioritized
Faith *prioritized* by the
entire faith community
and leadership.





People, Not Programs



You likely already feel it, but we'll go ahead and say it: Our good work in youth ministry isn't good enough. While each of us is well-intentioned and fueled by a desire to see young people thrive, most of us inadvertently prioritize programs over people. Programs aren't inherently bad, but they don't build lasting faith.

People, not programs, build lasting faith.


Here's what we know: Over 1 million young people drift from the faith community each year.¹ Odds are good that this isn't just a statistic for you. It's more personal. **It's teenagers you care about.**

In addition, almost half of youth ministry workers have left, or are thinking of leaving, youth ministry.²

That statistic might also be personal: Maybe you or someone you know are one of them.

But there is good news. It's the ultimate good news: Jesus wants to be in relationship with all generations, including teenagers.

And young people are most likely to grow in relationship with Jesus when they grow in relationship with adults who love Jesus.

1  ops the Great Opportunity

2 Fuller Youth Institute, **The FYI Report on Youth Leader Burnout & Wellbeing** (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2025).



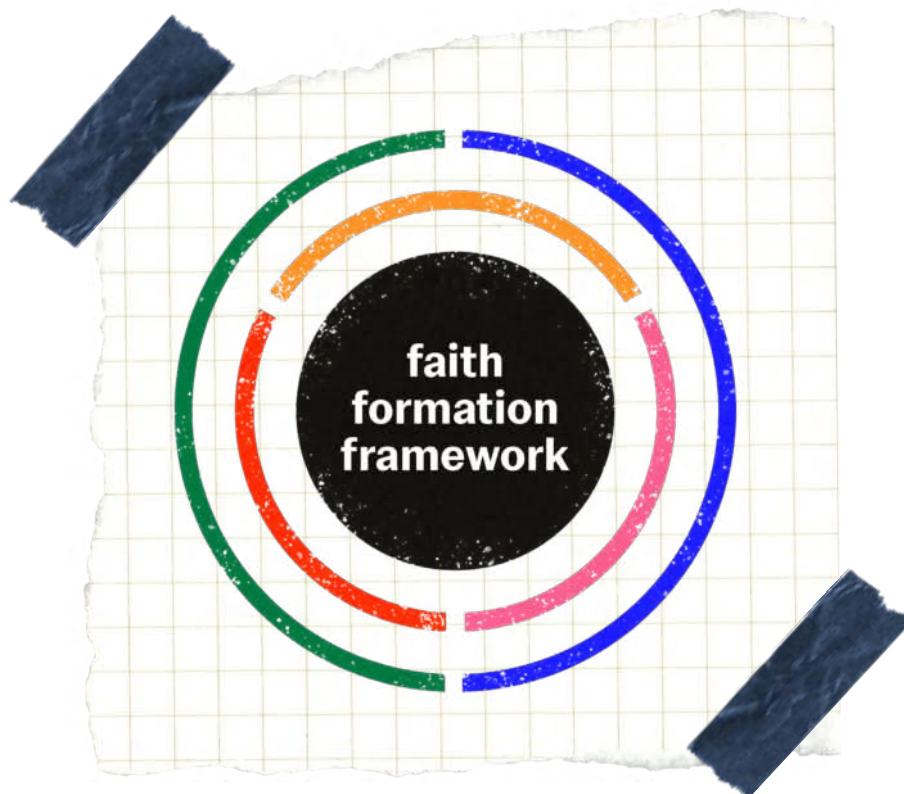
The Faith Formation Framework



So, how do we break free from the gravitational pull of how we've always done things in our approaches to youth ministry? Without blowing everything up (we're not advocating for that!), how can we take meaningful steps? We trust you know your context and have a general sense of some of the resistance you are likely to encounter if you want to see your church or parish become a hotbed of relational discipleship radically focused on Jesus.

Through research and lots of conversations with some of the 175 partner organizations and denominations in the TENx10 movement, we've come up with a model of what a discipling ministry looks like—a ministry likely to be a positive outlier to the ongoing trend of young people leaving the Christian faith.

We call it the Faith Formation Framework. It is grounded in the belief that young people are more likely to have a faith that matters when they experience relational discipleship radically focused on Jesus.



The Faith Formation Framework is built around five drivers:

1. Faith Shared by Adults

Every young person needs an adult who loves God and who loves them. In fact, research reveals that young people don't just need one adult that shares their faith...they need multiple adults like that! We see adults throughout scripture who passed on their faith to the next generation. Not just teaching them, but sharing life with them – a true reflection of 1 Thessalonians 2:8:

“Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.”



2. Faith Internalized Through Spiritual Practices and Learning

For thousands of years, the Christian tradition has involved learning and engaging with spiritual practices. Prayer, engaging scripture, and other methods of drawing close to God are central to our faith development. But we don't just do them for the sake of doing them. We do them because they help us truly own our faith, they shape who we are, and help us find ourselves in God's bigger story.

We need to prioritize creating dialog-based places of learning where young people are truly safe to verbalize what they believe, as well as their questions and doubts.³ And, we must elevate the teaching and experience of spiritual practices (for example, prayer, scripture reading, and seeking justice) that will fuel a life of faith when young people no longer attend our programs.



³ For more on the essential nature of statements of belief, or what the author calls “testimony,” see *Saying is Believing: The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development*, by Amanda Hontz Drury (IVP Academic, 2015).

3. Faith Applied Through Service and Justice

Every young person, every person, is created for God's greater purpose. They are given gifts and abilities and passions that help them live out their purpose and join in the work of God's kingdom. Young people need opportunities to live out their faith by serving others, bringing Jesus' prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven," to life! They need to experience being part of God's bigger story practically.



4. Faith Catalyzed by Family Intimacy and Intentionality

There is no greater influence on young people developing faith than parents and other caregivers possessing an active faith and talking about it with their children. Dr. Christian Smith, one of America's leading sociologists and the lead researcher on the National Study of Youth and Religion,⁴ once told a room full of youth workers that the correlation is so strong it's close to 1:1. He said, "You can certainly find exceptions, but in general, if you want to know what



the faith of a teenager will look like in adulthood, simply look at his or her parents."⁵ What can we infer from this? Youth workers and churches need to step up our game when it comes to encouraging and resourcing parents and other caregivers.

5. Faith Prioritized by the Entire Faith Community and Leadership

Research shows us that youth ministry alone will not turn the tide of young people walking away from their Christian faith. The faith of the next generation is the whole church's responsibility!

If you're blessed to be in a church that prioritizes young people across the board, we celebrate that with you. But we know that churches and parishes have so many competing priorities that young people rarely make the top 5 list. We need every faith community to prioritize young people like their future depends on it, because it does!



⁴ www.nsyrr.org

⁵ Quoted at the Junior High Pastors Summit in Chicago, IL, 2006.



**What's the “Kickstart”
for relational
discipleship radically
focused on Jesus?**



This Relational Discipleship Kickstart is just that, a “Kickstart!”

It is intended to help you bring the Faith Formation Framework to life within your faith community, to help your young people experience relational discipleship radically focused on Jesus.

The Kickstart has **seven modules**:

1. **Leading Yourself.** Because caring for your own soul is the first step in youth ministry
2. **Adult Mentors.** How to help all youth benefit from safe and healthy relationships with adult mentors who love young people and point them to Jesus
3. **Spiritual Practices and Learning: Part 1.** This section is important enough that we’ve divided it across two modules.
4. **Spiritual Practices and Learning: Part 2.**

5. **Service and Justice.** To help young people put their faith into action.
6. **Families.** How to partner well with families and caregivers, to help them build faith and family intimacy.
7. **Leading Change.** How to invite your entire faith community to prioritize the thriving of young people.

Each module contains a short video to watch, a Field Guide to work through, and optional bonus materials like testimonials from youth leaders and tips from TENx10 partners.

You can do it on your own, at your own pace, or in a cohort with other youth workers. We’ll admit, we think that a course about relational discipleship is better done in relationship :)

We hope that the Kickstart gives you the tools you need to begin to reorient your ministry around relational discipleship, radically focused on Jesus.





**Don't let perfection
get in the way of
starting**



We'll be surprised if any youth worker puts everything they learn in the kickstart into action. Especially the first time through. The goal isn't some artificial idea of perfection. You don't have to do every single step.

The most important thing is to get started. Dive in on the first module. Be encouraged in your own walk with Christ and build from there at a pace you can sustain.

**Just
get started.**

**The young people
in your ministry
are worth it.**



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