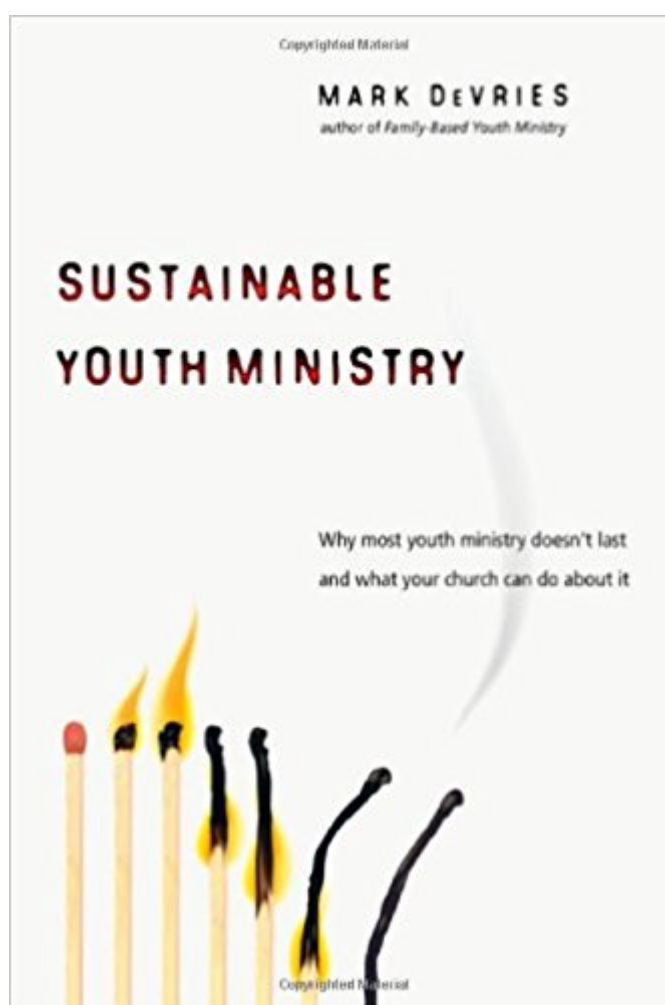


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# Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last And What Your Church Can Do About It



## Synopsis

You're looking for a youth pastor. Again. What goes wrong? Why do youth ministries crumble? And what is the cost to students, parents, volunteers and church staff? Is a sustainable youth ministry possible, even after a youth pastor leaves? Youth ministry expert Mark DeVries knows the answer is yes, because he helps build sustainable youth ministries through his coaching service called Youth Ministry Architects. So take heart: No matter what state the youth ministry at your church is in--in need of a leader and volunteers, full of battles and stress, large or small in number--it can be built to survive and to last for the long haul. Based on his own experience and on his many conversations and interviews with churches in crisis, DeVries pinpoints problems that cause division and burnout and dispels strongly held myths. He then provides the practical tools and structures pastors and church leaders need to lay a strong foundation for your ministry so that it isn't built on a person or the latest, greatest student ministry trend. His accessible guidance helps senior pastors and search committees create a realistic job description for a youth pastorprovides tips for making wise hiring decisionsequips youth pastors to build a strong volunteer teamoffers creative solutions to help youth pastors set and keep boundariesgives a road map for navigating church politicsand more Building a sustainable youth ministry is not easy, and it's not quick. But with commitment to the process, hard work and DeVries's guidance, you can put together a healthy youth ministry--one that fits your church and lasts for the long haul. Youth ministry can last. Here's how.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"If you want to read a book that will challenge you to develop the gifts God has entrusted to you, whether you will be personally involved in ministry or not, you will find practical advice in it to help you and your church build a strong, sustainable youth ministry." (Russ Laughlin, Ministry, July 2009)"DeVries offers a treasure of practical wisdom on the cultural and institutional prerequisites for youth ministry. This book should be required reading for any search committee that thinks it can solve all youth ministry problems with the next great hire. DeVries reveals how hard work, curiosity and hope make it possible to learn from inevitable failures." (Fred Edie, Christian Century, May 3, 2011)If you want to read a book that will challenge you to develop the gifts God has entrusted to you, whether you will be personally involved in youth ministry or not, you will find practical advice in it to help you and your church build a strong, sustainable youth ministry. (Russ Laughlin, Ministry, July 2009)Until senior pastors and elders take the wisdom and experience unleashed in this book seriously, they will continue to roll the dice in hope of landing on a sustainable youth ministry. (Mark Cannister, Youth Worker Journal, January/February 2010)Every now and then a resource comes along that reshapes how we think about youth ministry. Mark's is exactly that kind of book. More than just a bunch of ideas that work; it's a combination of philosophy and ideology that will shape the future of your ministry. There's something for everyone in this fantastic read. (The Journal of Student Ministries, Winter 2009)"Readers will find much practical information in this book." (Rae McCartney, Congregations, Summer 2009)"Not just for youth workers. An essential read for senior pastors, elders, deacons and search committees. Unless church leaders take seriously the wisdom and experience unleashed in this book they will continue to roll the dice in hope of landing on a sustainable youth ministry--this time around." (Mark Cannister, YouthWorker Journal, May/June 2009)"Sustainable Youth Ministry may be the closest thing to a gold mine for the encouragement that your youth leader needs. This is one resource that you should not go without, for you and your youth pastor." (Worship Leader, May 2009)"In Sustainable Youth Ministry, Mark DeVries presents a systems approach to youth ministry. Too many churches focus on short-term numbers, which pushes them toward superstar youth pastors and amped-up programs. Sustainable youth ministry focuses on a leadership team that builds relationships among youth and between youth and the entire congregation. Before hiring a new youth minister, the pastor and board members should read this book." (George P. Wood, AGThinkTank ([agthinktank.com](http://agthinktank.com)), March 2009)"Mark DeVries's Sustainable Youth Ministry may well be one of the most important books written on youth ministry in years. As the founder of Youth Ministry Architects, a coaching service for church leaders and youth ministers, DeVries has been allowed to develop and test the ideas he sets forth for the reader. 'Building Right' (Chapter 5) and 'Searching Right' (Chapter 7) are worth the price of the book alone."

(C. E. Moore, The Christian Manifesto (thechristianmanifesto.wordpress.com), December 31, 2009)"Mark DeVries has given away most of his adult years to serving young people in the church. He has done this with passion, with humor, and with a heart that is open and growing toward God. Anyone with a calling to youth ministry should read this book." (Mark Yaconelli, author of Wonder, Fear, and Longing)"You simply must read this book--not because of DeVries's generous spirit, irresistible metaphors, and profound love for teenagers, youth leaders and churches glistening on every page; not because the book is breathtakingly comprehensive (it will easily replace thirty books on your shelf); and not because DeVries himself is a genius. You must read it because it is the most sane book on youth ministry ever written, and DeVries has a clearheaded sense of call. While adolescent faith is more than the earthen vessels that contain it, DeVries contends that we need to shore up our organization or the treasure is going to leak straight through the cracks. So he doffs the gimmicks, magic bullets, foolproof programs and lucky hires, and demonstrates how sustainable youth ministry is planned, predictable and productive. Christ already does his part in youth ministry; it's high time we rolled up our sleeves and did ours." (Kenda Creasy Dean, associate professor, Princeton Theological Seminary and author of Worshipping at the Church of "Benign Whatever-ism")"Youth ministries everywhere are in crisis. Everyone is talking about it, but no significant solutions are emerging. One thing we know for sure--the ideas we have used for the last twenty years are tired. We can't fix this by simply doing a great job with a bad idea. This approach is leaving us with flat youth ministries and even more burnt-out youth ministers. Everything is up for grabs. This is where Mark DeVries comes into the picture. He is offering fresh ideas that work, that last and are sustainable--yes sustainable! Now, if you are looking for a quick fix, this isn't the book for you. If you are looking for real, long-term solutions that produce transformed students and healthy youth ministers, look no further!" (Randy Frazee, author of The Connecting Church and David Frazee, student at Baylor University)"Youth ministry is an all-church endeavor from start to finish. Sadly, most of our churches don't start with this understanding. The end result is a 'finish' that's far too often less than desirable. Mark DeVries offers a timely and practical challenge to the entire church--pastor, search committee and youth worker--that will foster an intentionality which brings great long-term dividends in a strong finish marked by spiritual maturity and kingdom growth." (Walt Mueller, president, Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, and author of Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture)"This is the youth ministry book we've all been waiting for. With wit and wisdom, Mark DeVries draws from a deep well of experience as both a youth pastor and youth ministry consultant to teach us how to build the 'dance floor' that will not only keep our youth ministries alive but help them to flourish. This is a hopeful, optimistic book that should be read by anyone who cares

about youth ministry in the local church." (Wayne Rice, cofounder, Youth Specialties and author of Understanding Your Teenager)"How can I adequately describe the credibility, wisdom and authenticity that Mark DeVries brings to the table in his new book? Sustainable Youth Ministry is the byproduct of his decades of fruitful, Christ-honoring ministry. Like few people I know, Mark has the experience and perspective to deeply impact anyone serious about youth ministry. Even more pivotal, Mark is honestly one of the most authentic and refreshing Christians I have met in a long time. So grab a good cup of coffee and start reading!" (Jeanne Mayo, president, Youth Leader's Coach, speaker and author)

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I had so many validating and "aha" moments while reading this book. Validating in that some of my suspicions were directly called out by the author and "aha" moments like how to more effectively recruit volunteers. Must read for all youth workers!

I have to say that this book has been very helpful to our youth ministry. It can be painful to read as it addresses a lot of things we were doing wrong, but this book works so long as you actually put into practice the things it mentions. Prepare to do a lot of hard work at implementing the structure necessary to build a sustainable youth ministry, but also be prepared to have the peace of mind knowing you are on the right track and heading in a positive direction! The blueprints given in this book are timeless and will always be relevant to every youth ministry! I know you will enjoy it as much as I did! Danny Leidy  
Legacy Youth Director  
New Dawn Church, Miami, FL

In 2008, Mark DeVries wrote one of the best youth ministry books available in the field, Sustainable Youth Ministry. This book influenced churches all over the country with a sound theology and understanding of the workings of youth ministry. The practical tools and insights that DeVries provided have increased the effectiveness of many local church youth ministries. In April, 2012, Youth Ministry Architects published The Sustainable Youth Ministry Study Guide as a companion to Sustainable Youth Ministry. Created by Abram Kielsmeier-Jones and Mark DeVries, this study guide

is the perfect companion to the book and is ideal for training a leadership team and developing partners and key stakeholders in youth ministry in the local church. Abram Kielsmeier- Jones has been in ministry for over a decade and I have had several opportunities to collaborate with him and to sit in on some of his staff meetings and trainings. Abram values discipleship and leadership and takes great care in training and developing leaders, parents, and students while nurturing their relationships with Jesus. It is exciting to have a youth minister and developer of leaders of this caliber writing the study guide for Sustainable Youth Ministry. He implemented this study guide as he developed it. This work is not just a compilation of theoretical ideas; it is practical, and its value has been proven in the field. The Sustainable Youth Ministry Study Guide is a thirteen chapter, downloadable, PDF book that follows the outline and structure of Sustainable Youth Ministry. The study guide breaks down the chapters into easy to understand chunks that convey the main ideas of the book for time conscious parents, ministry leaders, and volunteers. The questions asked in each of the chapters help leaders to determine how best to apply the book and its insights to their unique ministry context and to think critically about youth ministry. The suggested prayers at the end of each chapter help to focus the readers on the Sustainer Himself. The study guide is easy to read and to follow and is consistent in design, layout, structure and quality. Sustainable Youth Ministry is a must read for every youth minister and pastor, and I highly recommend The Sustainable Youth Ministry Study Guide as an addition to the book to help train parents, ministry leaders, and volunteers in the local church. I am very excited for the impact that this tool will have on youth ministry when coupled with Sustainable Youth Ministry the book. To find out more about The Sustainable Youth Ministry Study Guide, Sustainable Youth Ministry the book, or Youth Ministry Architects, please visit Youth Ministry Architects at [ymarchitects.com](http://ymarchitects.com). This review was first published in Youth Worker and on my blog, My Two Mites.

Is your youth ministry going down the drain and you need to know the steps to fix that? Are you not able to maintain a strong ministry to the younger generation and you want the specific steps to make this happen? Are the adults in your congregation looking for a quick fix to how to make youth ministry work? If you answered yes to the above questions then this is not the book for you. If you are wondering how to build a thriving ministry to young people that will take time and failures to build and are ready to go into the trenches and work on youth ministry, then Sustainable Youth Ministry Is the book for you. Mark lays out a wonderful plan for shaping all ministry. Helping the youth worker and pastors understand that we are only interims, that someone will follow us, and the things we do to pave the way for those that follow us. Mark gives us an understanding of ministry that is well

thought out and organized that would fit many different aspects of ministry. Beware thought, this is not a book that lays out the steps and tells you the 1 2 3 process of making your ministry work. Mark lays out steps to follow, but they are high level processes that if put in place will be secure a foundation upon which a successful ministry can be built. There is no cookie cutter to making it work but if you can follow the process and work within the responsibility it brings, the outcome could be marvelous. Mark has laid out an ideal understanding of what a youth ministry, or in my opinion any ministry, team should look and function like. These steps could help all ministries and congregation set a clear foundation for ministry for many years. I highly recommend this book to all leaders in the church, from youth workers, to pastors, to volunteers in ministry. If we can all communicate and work together the foundation will be that much stronger and ministry will work that much easier.

I believe this book fills a much needed gap in ministry. There are excellent resources that deal with Youth Ministry for the first 2-3 years in a strategic hands-on approach, and I won't list them but they are many. Once you look beyond this beginning, most books either fall into one of two categories - they either get "above it all" into theory or theology, or they give a blueprint that is left to be picked apart and emulated at other churches. This is the first book I have read that incorporates theology and theory that stays close to the ground with strategies and foundations that are just as relevant to the 2 year rookie minister to the 20 year veteran. I have been in ministry at the same church for 12 years - started straight out of university. And this book rocked my world. I highly recommend it for anyone, but especially for those veterans for whom the honeymoon has worn off and who are looking to streamline every facet of their ministry for effectiveness for families over the long haul.

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