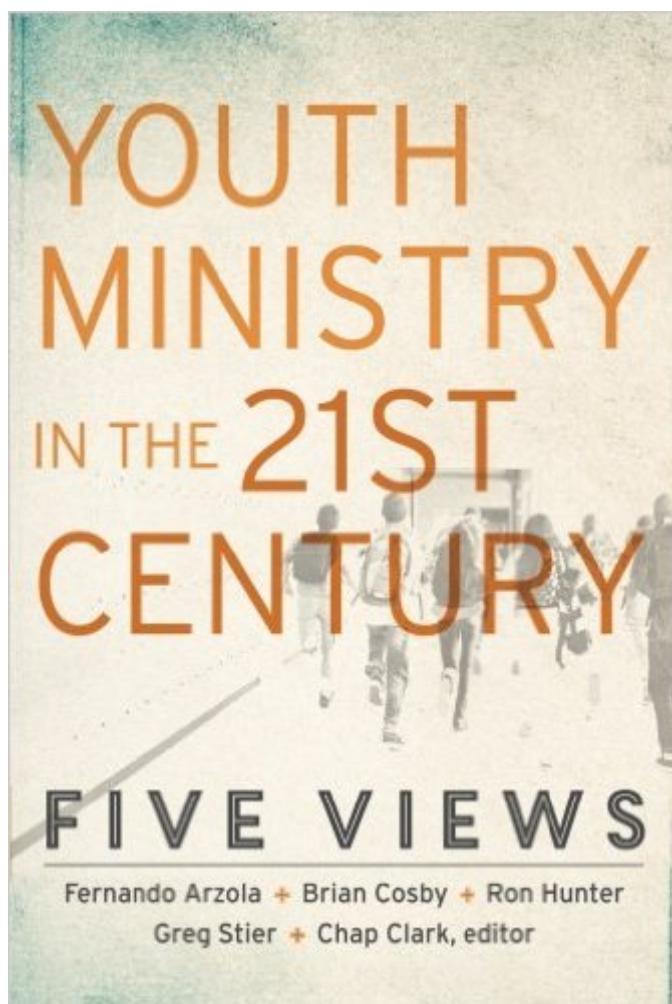


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# Youth Ministry In The 21st Century: Five Views (Youth, Family, And Culture)



## **Synopsis**

There are many philosophies and strategies that drive today's youth ministry. To most people, they are variations on a single goal: to make faithful disciples of young people. However, digging deeper into various programs, books, and concepts reveals substantive differences among approaches. Bestselling author Chap Clark is one of the leading voices in youth ministry today. In this multiview work, he brings together a diverse group of leaders to present major views on youth ministry. Chapters are written in essay/response fashion by Fernando Arzola, Greg Stier, Ron Hunter, Brian Cosby, and Chap Clark. As the contributors present their views and respond to each of the other views, they discuss their task and calling, giving readers the resources they need to develop their own approach to youth ministry. Offering a model of critical thinking and respectful dialogue, this volume provides a balanced, irenic approach to a topic with which every church wrestles.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I am a youth pastor, which means that the Lord has given me the privilege of ministering to a group of bright, knowledgeable, confused, hormonal, and impressionable people known as teenagers. As we find ourselves ministering to this group of people in such a different age known as the 21st-century, what is the best way of going about reaching them? It is in response to this question that a new book has been written: *Youth Ministry In The 21st Century: Five Views*. The book is edited by Chap Clark, and includes contributions by the editor, Fernando Arzola, Brian Cosby, Ron

Hunter, and Greg Stier. Each of these men has had a substantial time of their life devoted to youth ministry, and therefore they each have wisdom and experience from which to speak.

**The Purpose** From the introduction, Clark says that the purpose of the book is that each of the contributors would "advocate for their own convictions and perspectives on what ministry to adolescents essentially is. Our desire is to offer five relatively unique voices and perspectives on the basics and foundation of what youth ministry should be about now and in the coming decades" (xiv).

**The Views** So what are the five views represented?

1. Greg Stier – The Gospel Advancing View of Youth Ministry. In essence, Steir argues the the central and primary focus of ministry to youth is evangelism. Everything else that the ministry does should be serving this one ultimate purpose of evangelism.
2. Brian Cosby – The Reformed View of Youth Ministry. Cosby argues that we are to use "the blueprint of biblical methodology" that we find in Scripture in our youth ministry. And what is that "blueprint"? Using the means of grace – God's Word, prayer, sacraments, service, and gospel community – to minister to teenagers and incorporate them into the life of the body of the church.
3. Chap Clark – The Adoption View of Youth Ministry. Clark argues that the primary focus of the youth ministry should be adoption into the family of faith. He says: "I contend that the primary reason we have lost so many of the hearts and investment of our young when they leave the confines of the high school routine is that we have failed to provide them with the most vital resource they possessed in Christ: the God-given faith community" (75).
4. Fernando Arzola – The Ecclesial View of Youth Ministry. Arzola writes as one who desires youth ministry to focus less on contemporary matters and more on understanding their places within the larger communion of saints, particularly in the context of church history. Therefore, he sees the need for youth ministry is to recover the 4 credal characteristics of the church: The Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. He sees the need of the day for youth ministry as being reconnecting youth to their roots and having a better understanding of church history and tradition.
5. Ron Hunter – The D6 View of Youth Ministry. Hunter, the Found of D6 (short for Deuteronomy 6), argues for intentional "generational discipleship lives out through both the church and the home" (148). He sees the youth pastor's role as threefold: (1) Teach and minister to the youth; (2) Train and equip the parents; and (3) Work closely with the leaders of other age-specific ministries in the church to develop a consistent and comprehensive process of training and discipling children and young adults in the church.

**My Thoughts** So which "view" did I think was the best? Honestly, there was good stuff in all 5 of them. I would say that the view that I found myself saying the most "Amens" while reading was Brian Cosby's Reformed View (followed closely by Ron Hunter's D6 view). My least favorite view was Fernando Arzola's Ecclesial View. In Cosby's chapter, he reflects on a

statistic that tells of that 3 out of 4 American teenagers claim to be Christians, and most are affiliated with a religious organization in some way. However, only half consider it very important, and fewer than half actually practice their faith as a regular part of their faith. So what should we do about this reality? Cosby comments: "This is where the importance of method comes to the forefront. How do we get these bored, purposeless, yet (self-professing) 'religious' teens not only into the church but also into a sustainable, Christ-treasuring faith? Many churches have turned to competing with the world to woo and attract them by all sorts of gimmicks and giveaways. But is this the method that God has given us to draw young people into a relationship with him, or are we supplanting the God-ordained means by which he does that work of saving and sanctifying?" (40). The answer is that this is not the method that God has given us, and it is supplanting the God-given means of saving and sanctifying — the Word of God, prayer, sacraments, service, and community.

These are the things that the Lord has given us to use in our ministry, for it is through these things that the Lord has promised to save and sanctify. Conclusion Overall, there was quite a lot of agreement between the 5 contributors. Rather than there being a lot of disagreement, there was instead just a difference in emphasis. All of the contributors agreed that a number of things were vital for a successful and faithful youth ministry — Intergenerational discipleship, parental training, evangelism, quality and substantial Bible teaching vs. entertainment, etc. Where the difference seemed to lie, then, was a matter of emphasis. Overall, I thought the book was only mildly helpful. It was interesting to read the 5 different articles, and then the responses to each view by each contributor. It felt like I was watching an extended panel between 5 experienced youth ministers. However, it felt sometimes like they were arguing about nothing. What I mean is that there seemed to be so much agreement and consistent emphases between all of them that what it really came down to was a matter of emphasis, not actual disagreements. I appreciated the book, definitely took some things away from it, and was stretched and challenged in some areas. But I suspect it will be one of those books that will now get added to my shelf and never picked up again. If you are a youth pastor, or training to be one, it may be a helpful book for you to pick up, but I wouldn't say it's an essential one. In accordance with FTC regulations I would like to thank Baker Academic for providing me with a review copy of this book in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Five contributors, five views, five counter-responses per view, but only one shared concern: How to reach out to the youths of the 21st Century better and more effectively? Inspired by a 2001 book published under the title "Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church," the intention is to update the views as our world becomes more complex. Instead of going forth to present another model,

there is a shift toward a firmer footing on theological considerations. Instead of simply the "what" and the "how" of doing youth ministry, the view is about the "why" and "where" of application. We are living in a world of newer challenges. Instead of having young people coming into our churches, we have an era where young people are leaving churches in droves. We have the rise of the Nones. The five academics, practitioners, and authors agree about the need for "theological, psychosocial, and ecological grounding" for the work of youth ministry. Greg Stier (Gospel Advancing View) is founder and president of Dare 2 Share ministry which focuses on equipping youths to do evangelism, out of which discipleship would flow. Fernando Arzola (Ecclesial View) as Associate Professor of religion at Nyack College sees formal teaching as the key strategy for nurture and discipleship of youths. Ron Hunter (Family Focused View) is director of Randall house as well as the Director of the D6 Conference. Brian Cosby (Reformed Youth View) is Lead Pastor of Wayside Presbyterian Church and visiting professor at Reformed Theological Seminary. General editor, Chap Clark (Adoption Model) is Professor and Chair of the youth, family, and culture department at Fuller Theological Seminary. The first view is Greg Stier's "Gospel Advancing View" which basically believes that Jesus himself was a youth leader! The ones called to change the world are all youths. The goal is not evangelism but nurture of teenagers who would do the work of witnessing and the sharing of the Word. It is essentially discipleship where the vital elements are: 1) equipping for relational ministry; 2) sharing of stories; 3) persistent gospeling activities at youth meetings; 4) empowering and focusing on the 10%; 5) gospeling everything; 6) Prayer. Criticisms come fast and furious leaving Stier to acknowledge that his model while is high on the "go" portion, may be deficient in the "grow" aspect. The second view is Brian Cosby's "Reformed View" which seeks to put youth ministry under the umbrella of distinctively reformed theological doctrines via the "means of grace" of prayer, Word, sacraments, service, and gospel community. Faithfulness is more important than success. If the Bible provides the "content and method," the means of grace provide the how to go about youth ministry. The criticisms tend to be about the overwhelming slant toward Reformed theology in an increasingly nondenominational world; the danger of disconnecting the church from the youths if one was to shove theological content down the throats of the young; doctrinal polarizations; etc. The third view is Chap Clark's "Adoption View" which believes that we need a community of faith to raise a young in faith. He goes through a historical overview from Mike Yaconelli's experiment model to Doug Field's Purpose Driven Youth Ministry. He cites Mark Senter III's three statements about youth ministry which make a lot of sense. 1) Youth Ministry begins when adults enter in; 2) Youth Ministry happens when adults help the young to mature in Christ; 3) Youth Ministry ceases when the adult-youth discipleship relationship breaks down. The idea of a family

adoption model shows us that youths do not grow on their own. They need an interested adult or mature spiritual person to guide them. The responses are gracious and humble as the other respondents applaud many things learned from Clark. Some have even added new dimensions to understanding the adoption model! Clark then summarizes his view as "inviting our young into the calling, life, and work" of the kingdom. The fourth view is Fernando Arzola's "Ecclesial View" tries to put youth ministry back under the purview of the Church. The concern is that modern youth ministries tend to be separated from the main church ministries and are in danger of missing out on the rich history and traditions of the church. The Orthodox perspective needs to be reappropriated, not abandoned. Youth Ministry must includes the four creedal characteristics: 1) Oneness; 2) Holiness; 3) Catholicity; 4) Apostolic. Thus, youth ministry is less about entertainment but ecclesiastically grounded. While heavy in theology, the criticisms are on the practical aspects of how. In response, Arzola maintains that the lack of applications should not undermine the focus on theological grounding. The fifth view is Ron Hunter's "D6 View" which is short for Deuteronomy 6. The key emphasis is for parents and teachers to consistently teach, model, and build relationships with the young, a form of generational discipleship. It is a team effort. Parents must be coached to be coaches. Students need "vital concepts, character building, and biblical values." Parents are the primary spiritual caregivers. If Arzola is heavy on theology, Hunter's view is heavy on family focus.

So What?=====

Each view has both strengths and weaknesses. The responses of each contributor to each proposed view are rich and varied. Like iron sharpening iron, not only did the five authors learn from one another, they helped nuance the complexity and the changing needs of youth ministry. Readers can benefit from the academic, the practical, the issues, and the historical lessons we can learn from. Although the editor has explained the exclusion of other prominent youth experts like Doug Fields and Kara Powell, I still believe that there is room for a sixth view. A dedicated website has been set up for readers to check out as and when there are updates. Youth ministry remains one of the most, if not the most, challenging ministries in any Church. Sadly for some, this segment has largely disappeared. Some churches bring in "superstar youth pastors" and some passionate volunteers to run the ministry. Others use big budgets, sophisticated programming, but still find it challenging to cultivate spiritual maturity among the youths. The goal of this book is not to convince us of any one view, but to provide five basic ingredients for us to learn of, so that we can discern and develop a combination that is appropriate for our congregations. I believe that this book is needed for at least three reasons. First, youth ministry is big. Just because the youth departments of many churches are not growing does not mean that there is a shrinking youth population. There will always be young people. We must not forget that children will

eventually grow up, and when they do, will there be a ministry that can help them grow? Second, youth ministry is complex. A pastor friend of mine tells me that youth ministries need to be re-invented every two years. While I may dispute the exact number of years, I would concur with the need to look at re-inventing ourselves regardless of whether the tool is working or not. With a complex youth ministry, there is lots of room for five different views, even more. The range of options available to us will suddenly become broader. For youth ministers and volunteers, this book will give a good overview of the different views so that they can have maximum number of resources available for their use. Third, youth ministry is vital. This cannot be over-emphasized as the young will form the leadership core for all of our churches. There is no running away from aging. Even the most faithful and fervent leaders will grow old. The gifted will gradually age and fade away. What remains will be those who have been discipled in Christ. This book is not about whether we agree with all, with some, or with none of them. It is about being humble enough to acknowledge that youths all over the world are important. We need one another. Thanks to the five authors, readers will benefit from the plethora of knowledge and experience that the Church so badly needs. Rating: 4.75 stars of 5. conrade This book is provided to me courtesy of Baker Academic and Graf-Martin Communications in exchange for an honest review. All opinions offered above are mine unless otherwise stated or implied.

Some people don't like these Views books, but I just love them. The best thing about them is hearing someone else's view from their own mouth (pen? keyboard?) and not from someone else's summary of their position. I was really forced to think through some philosophy of ministry things in my own ministry to the youth at my church. I have been challenged to sharpen things and be more deliberate and explicit in goals and methods.

5 ways to keep youth plugged in: <http://bit.ly/1Nam1Yq>

An excellent way to assess and design where Youth Ministry is and where it is headed for hiring.

Good job.

I expected something else, more of a "how to" and I didn't get that from this book.

Bible college recommended

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