



Fuller Youth Institute

Churches Engaging Young People Project
Stage Three
Interview and Focus Group Guidelines and Protocols

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CEYP Stage Three Interview and Focus Group Guidelines and Protocols

Protocol for conducting interviews/focus groups:

1. As a best practice, work with your church point person to plan and conduct interviews and focus groups at the church in a visible location, while other ministry is taking place. If this is not possible, select some other public location (such as a restaurant or coffee shop) that still offers the necessary privacy.
2. Most interviews and focus groups should last approximately 60-90 minutes, although that may vary slightly based on your context. Focus groups can vary in size from 6-15 people each.
3. At the beginning of the interview, explain the informed consent form verbally, and have participants sign them. Note that for minors, the parent needs to sign the consent form and the minor needs to sign the assent form. Collect the forms and turn them in after your visit.
4. Start the audio-recorder. You do not need to announce to the person/group that you are starting the recording (as it is already contained in the consent form). Test the audio quality and volume beforehand, so you have an idea of where you need to place the recorder. Also, use a watch or clock to pay attention to the timing of the interview and pace yourself accordingly.
5. Since we will not be transcribing all of the interviews and focus groups, it will be helpful if you make notes about when key stories and examples occur – that way you can quickly transcribe the most important stories and examples. It may be helpful to have at least one team member who can see the time on the recorder in order to note times when particular stories or examples were provided. Generally have one team member take more notes while the other team member guides the conversation.
6. Begin the interview/focus group by asking people to share their name and area of involvement in the church.
7. Once the interviews are complete, thank participants for their time and give each person a \$20 gift card.
8. You will likely be asked for your perspective on the church and/or what we're learning in the project. Please respond that we will send our research conclusions for the overall project to their church leaders once the project is complete, but until that point all of our insights would simply be incomplete. Graciously decline the opportunity to advise them on any direction.

Questions to ask in most interviews or focus groups:

1. Based on what the church has already said about the 9 characteristics, ask for examples, stories, etc., that will help us understand those characteristics better. It would be wise for you to dig into at least 4-5 of the most prominent characteristics for that church, even if only 1 or 2 seem the most critical.
2. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
3. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like?
4. In what ways would you say your church makes young people a priority? What does your church emphasize less in order to make young people a priority?

5. How do different generations in your church (young and old) interact?
6. How does your church know whether or not it is effective, especially effective with young people? What does the church measure or pay attention to? What are you doing less of in order to make young people a priority?
7. What would you want to say to a church that is struggling to engage young people about how they could do better?
8. Is there anything else you'd like us to know about why your church is effective with young people that we may be missing or that we may not have asked?
9. How would you describe your church to a non-Christian?
10. How does the church emphasize/practice authentic community with college students and those in their 20s, who are often highly mobile and transitional?

Suggested people for interviews and focus groups, including suggested questions to ask:

1. Senior/lead/head pastor interview (if unavailable, please talk to the "most senior" leader available, such as the Executive Pastor, Associate Pastor, etc.).
 - a. How long have you been in this role?
 - b. How do you see your role in ministry to young people? Tell me more about your approach to church leadership? Thinking about your overall church, where do you invest your time and attention?
 - i. How would you describe your relationship with your youth pastor?
 - ii. If you could say anything to youth pastors in other churches about working with their senior/lead pastor, what would you say? What are challenges in leading your youth pastor?
 - c. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
 - d. How does your church know whether or not it is effective, especially effective with young people? What does the church measure or pay attention to?
 - i. Why does your church have the staffing and structure it does? How do you make staffing decisions?
 - e. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like? Focus on what is the gospel to this church (not just the individual).
 - f. What are your church's priorities? How do young people fit into those priorities? What does it mean to make young people a priority? How do you make decisions about resource allocation? What are you doing less of in order to make young people a priority?
 - i. How does your church balance a focus on tradition with a focus on innovation?
 - ii. What would you change about the youth ministry in your church?
 - g. How do young people contribute to the health or thriving of the church overall (you can likely ask for more detailed examples or stories based on your review of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 documents)?
 - h. What would you say to another pastor who wants to know why your church is effective with young people?
 - i. What is the vision for your church? Where is it headed? What do you hope it will do, be, or look like?
 - j. What words or phrases would you use to describe the young people in your church?

- k. How do you keep yourself fresh in ministry? What feeds you?
 - l. How does Scripture inform your understanding of youth ministry/the church?
2. Youth/Young Adult Pastor interview
- a. How long have you been in this role?
 - b. Please tell me about your approach to youth ministry. How and why do you do what you do?
 - c. How does your church know whether or not it is effective, especially effective with young people? What does the church measure or pay attention to?
 - d. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
 - e. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like? Focus on what is the gospel to this church (not just the individual).
 - f. In what ways would you say your church makes young people a priority? What does your church emphasize less in order to make young people a priority?
 - i. Tell us a story about when your church really showed support for young people. (Note: you can also ask for specific stories based on elements of the 9 characteristics you've gleaned are prevalent in the church from all research up to this point.)
 - ii. How does the church emphasize/practice authentic community with college students and those in their 20s, who are often highly mobile and transitional?
 - iii. How does your church balance a focus on tradition with a focus on innovation?
 - g. How do young people contribute to the health or thriving of the church overall (you can likely ask for more detailed examples or stories based on your review of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 documents)?
 - h. What would you say to another youth pastor or pastor who wants to know why your church is effective with young people?
 - i. What is the vision for your church? Where is it headed? What do you hope it will do, be, or look like?
 - j. How would you describe your relationship with your lead/senior pastor/church board?
 - k. How do you support your senior pastor/leadership?
 - l. What are the obstacles to your church being more effective with young people?
3. High school student focus group
- a. Begin the focus group by introducing yourself, then asking people to briefly share their name and how long they've been involved with this church.
 - b. What do you like about this church?
 - c. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
 - d. What do you experience that makes you feel welcome here? What happened today that makes you feel at home? Or is there a time you felt like you belonged in this church? Why do you keep coming back? If I (or someone your age) was thinking about visiting your church, what would you say to them about why they should attend?
 - i. How do different generations in your church (young and old) interact?
 - ii. Tell me more about the impact the children's/middle school ministry has had on you?

- e. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like? Focus on what is the gospel to this church (not just the individual).
 - i. What about your church has best helped you understand who Jesus is, or what it means to trust and follow him? Could you describe a time where you felt things "clicked" and you understood what Christianity is all about?
 - ii. How has this church challenged you to grow in your faith?
 - iii. Can you think of 1 or 2 moments or experiences (related to your church) that really stick out that really shaped you or were important to you? They could be hard moments or good moments. Please describe them.
 - f. Who is important to you as a leader in this church? Why? Any stories or examples you can provide?
 - g. Tell me about the worship services at your church?
 - h. Please tell more about missions/service in your church, including stories and examples?
 - i. Do you plan to attend this church when you're in college? Why or why not?
4. College age (19-23) focus group
- a. Begin the focus group by introducing yourself, then asking people to briefly share their name and how long they've been involved with this church.
 - b. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
 - c. What do you experience that makes you feel welcome here? What happened today that makes you feel at home? Or is there a time you felt like you belonged in this church? Why do you keep coming back? If I (or someone your age) was thinking about visiting your church, what would you say to them about why they should attend?
 - d. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like? Focus on what is the gospel to this church (not just the individual).
 - i. What about your church has best helped you understand who Jesus is, or what it means to trust and follow him? Could you describe a time where you felt things "clicked" and you understood what Christianity is all about?
 - ii. How has this church helped you to grow in your faith?
 - iii. Can you think of 1 or 2 moments or experiences (related to your church) that really stick out that really shaped you or were important to you? They could be hard moments or good moments. Please describe them.
 - e. How does the church emphasize/practice authentic community with college students and those in their 20s, who are often highly mobile and transitional?
 - i. In what ways would you say your church makes young people a priority?
 - ii. How do different generations in your church (young and old) interact?
 - f. How has this church helped you discover your vocation, career, or calling?
 - g. Who is important to you as a leader in this church? Why? Any stories or examples you can provide?
 - h. Tell me about the worship services at your church?
 - i. How church does your church engage/cultural/societal issues?
 - j. Please tell more about missions/service in your church, including stories and examples?

5. Late twenties (24-29) focus group

- a. Begin the focus group by introducing yourself, then asking people to briefly share their name and how long they've been involved with this church.
- b. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
- c. What do you experience that makes you feel welcome here? What happened today that makes you feel at home? Or is there a time you felt like you belonged in this church? Why do you keep coming back? If I (or someone your age) was thinking about visiting your church, what would you say to them about why they should attend?
- d. How does your church know whether or not it is effective, especially effective with young people? What does the church measure or pay attention to?
- e. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like? Focus on what is the gospel to this church (not just the individual).
 - i. What about your church has best helped you understand who Jesus is, or what it means to trust and follow him? Could you describe a time where you felt things "clicked" and you understood what Christianity is all about?
 - ii. How has this church challenged you to grow in your faith?
 - iii. Can you think of 1 or 2 moments or experiences (related to your church) that really stick out that really shaped you or were important to you? They could be hard moments or good moments. Please describe them.
- f. How does the church emphasize/practice authentic community with college students and those in their 20s, who are often highly mobile and transitional?
 - i. In what ways would you say your church makes young people a priority? What does it do less of to make young people a priority?
 - ii. How do different generations in your church (young and old) interact?
- g. How has this church helped you discover your vocation, career, or calling?
- h. Who is important to you as a leader in this church? Why? Any stories or examples you can provide?
 - i. Tell me about the worship services at your church?
 - j. How church does your church engage/cultural/societal issues?
- k. Please tell more about missions/service in your church, including stories and examples?

6. Youth ministry volunteer focus group

- a. Begin the focus group by introducing yourself, then asking people to briefly share their name and how long they've been involved with this church.
- b. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
- c. In what ways would you say your church makes young people a priority? What does your church emphasize less in order to make young people a priority?
 - i. What is your role in all of this as a volunteer? How do you fit in? What do you do?
- d. How does your church know whether or not it is effective, especially effective with young people? What does the church measure or pay attention to?
 - i. How does your church balance tradition with innovation? What is changing? What is not? Is your church changing fast enough?

- e. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like? Focus on what is the gospel to this church (not just the individual).
 - f. Who is important to you as a leader in this church? Why? Any stories or examples you can provide?
 - g. What is the vision for your church? Where is it headed? What do you hope it will do, be, or look like?
7. Parents of high school/young adult focus group
- a. Begin the focus group by introducing yourself, then asking people to briefly share their name and how long they've been involved with this church.
 - b. Is there a story you could tell me that summarizes what your church is all about? Maybe a moment when you were most proud of your church? What is a story from your church where someone's life was changed for the better?
 - c. In what ways would you say your church makes young people a priority? What does your church emphasize less in order to make young people a priority?
 - i. What is your role in all of this as a parent? How do you fit in? What do you do?
 - ii. Tell me more about how your church partners with you in the faith development of your children.
 - d. How does your church know whether or not it is effective, especially effective with young people? What does the church measure or pay attention to?
 - e. What do you think is the good news of Christianity? Or said another way, what does it mean for a young person in your church to trust and follow Jesus? Without naming names, could you think of and describe someone in your church who is a good example of what it means to trust and follow Jesus? What is that person like, or what does that person's life look like? Focus on what is the gospel to this church (not just the individual).
 - f. Who is important to you as a leader in this church? Why? Any stories or examples you can provide?
 - g. What is the vision for your church? Where is it headed? What do you hope it will do, be, or look like?
8. Other interviews and focus groups, as determined by your document review prior to the visit (for example, if everyone in the church talked about one volunteer who was critical to the church's success, it might make sense to interview that volunteer). If possible, also conduct a church history focus group in order to understand the timeline, historical events, and significant people who have been part of the church's past.