

Theological Reflective Practice

Topic: Leadership and Vision

Author: Robin Barden

Date: May 2016

Biography:

Robin is the Director for Lay Training at Ridley Hall Cambridge which includes a popular youth ministry degree. Robin is passionate about resourcing the church for ministry and mission, evangelism and discipleship. As a youth minister and youth worker of over 20 years experience, Robin has a particular interest in training youth leaders to build God's church. Robin is married to Sam and enjoys various fitness activities including callisthenics and running.

INTRODUCTION

Theological reflective practice is the art of thinking about what you do, in order to do it better in the future.

Theological reflective practice is more than just thinking about what you can do better. Reflecting on practice involves thinking about how the young people, God, your church and other factors influence what you do and how you do it.

Theological reflective practice encourages you to think about things like human behaviour, human development (adolescence), and how people learn. How we understand God, church, ministry and mission, as well as how what you do fits in with the vision of your church.

THEOLOGY

Theological reflective practice encourages you to deepen your faith by exploring how your current understanding of God, faith, church, salvation and other theological topics, influences your practice.

At the same time, theological reflective practice challenges you to consider how your practice measures up to your understanding of God's purposes.

PRACTICALITIES

You will need to set aside time to theologically reflect on your work. You will need at least half an hour for this exercise.

This is best done in a quiet space where you won't be disturbed. You will need paper and pen and/or relevant resources depending on your choice of reflection style – see below.

Ideally you would share your reflection with a trusted mentor who can comment on your conclusions.

REFLECTION & LEARNING

Learning occurs when you undertake theological reflective practice. The key steps are outlined below.

Step 1:

Think of a youth work situation that is on your mind.

Jot down on a piece of paper what happened. This can be in the form of a story, a few key words, a drawing or whatever works best for you.

Step 2:

Think about you in that situation. Focus on the thing that stands out for you but questions you may like to consider are: what were you feeling? What were you thinking? How did you respond? Why did you respond in this way? How did you feel about your response? What were you trying to do and why?

Think about the young people in that situation. Again focus on what stands out for you but questions you might like to ask are: who was there? Why were they there? How were they engaging with you, the church, and each other? Why do you think this was? What was their response to your intervention?

Think about God in that situation. Again focus on what stands out for you but questions you might like to ask are: what was God interested in? was God recognised by the young people? was God recognised by you Why/why not? how were God's purposes advanced? Did it smell of God?

You may also want to think about others who were involved or would be interested in what happened, such as volunteers, your church, the young peoples families, in a similar fashion. The choice of what you think about depends on the situation and what stands out for you. A a mentor may suggest areas you hadn't thought about.

Step 3:

Think about what stands out for you and what connects.

For example, perhaps the thing that stands out is you forgot about God because you were really focused on whether the young people did as they were told. On reflection you can think, is trying to make sure the young people do as they are told as important as asking where is God in this?

Step 4

Think about what you will do differently in the future.

In the example above, perhaps you will think that in the future, when I get annoyed that the young people aren't doing as they are told, I am going to remember to pause and ask God, where are you in all of this? What would you do?

DEVELOPING PRACTICE

Get into the habit of reflecting on practice once a week and don't worry if you find it difficult at first, it does get easier!

Having a mentor who you share your reflections with is the best way to engage in reflective practice and develop this skill.

Remember, you are not being assessed. Record your reflections in a way that works for you.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://www.youthworkconference.co.uk/self-reflection-the-hawk-in-your-mind/>

Reflective practice in Youth Work by Ian Hoskins - Grove booklet Y41 in the youth series

Skills For Collaborative Practice, Chapter 4, *Reflecting Skills*: SCM Press