



Youth Ministry in a Multifaith Society: Forming Christian Identity Among Skeptics, Syncretists & Sincere Believers of Other Faiths

\$16, 224 pages, paperback
 978-0-8308-4112-7

Len Kageler, PhD, is professor of youth and family studies and associate dean of faculty development at Nyack College in New York. He has authored a dozen books, including *The Youth Ministry Survival Guide* and *The Volunteer's Field Guide to Youth Ministry*. He speaks and teaches widely in North America and the European Union.

Youth Ministry Marketplace

While Christian youth ministry appears far more organized and developed, other religious traditions are catching up, finding their own young people responsive to the methods Christians use. In the North American context other religions are becoming increasingly aware that, unlike in their home countries, they exist in a free market of religious ideas and opportunities. They must compete or risk seeing their own youth converted by the sophisticated programs and techniques offered by Christian youth ministry. Seeing their own children as religious consumers, then, has forced these religions to become more adept at being religious producers. This “rational choice” vocabulary explains why especially Islam, Judaism and Hinduism have adopted the Christian approach to youth and youth ministry.

From this perspective, given the market nature of free religious association among North American youth, as other religions improve their own youth ministry “products,” Christian youth ministry must keep its competitive edge through innovation and improvement. For years Christian youth groups have happily accepted into their ranks youth of other faith traditions, and sometimes the parents of these youth have followed them into the church as well. There is no market law that precludes the reversal of this flow: other religions might leapfrog Christian youth ministry, resulting in the youth (and perhaps their parents) to begin flowing in the opposite direction.

In North America it seems that the vast majority of Jewish and Hindu youth ministries merely seek to conserve their own youth. The same is true of Buddhist youth work, what there is of it. Soka Gakkai, though, is much more *outreach* focused. As for Muslim youth work, about half of their youth group websites mention *dawa* events, which focus on outreach. A *dawa* event is not for the spiritual growth of Muslim young people but rather a venue for Muslim youth to bring their non-Muslim friends – an entry-level, no pressure “come and have fun with us and see that we’re normal” opportunity. Sound familiar?

While most of our students will not have to choose between their youth group and going to “Pizza and Prophets” with their friend Rashid, they may experience doubt about Jesus as the *only* way as they are repeatedly confronted with the new cultural norm of tolerance or the repugnant thought of their volleyball team member facing eternity in hell simply because he or she was born into a Hindu family.

Awareness of other religions is like a new window or door that was not previously there. These things call into question previously held assumptions. This is an important and necessary step in the spiritual formation of our youth.

—Adapted from chapter one, “The Rise of Youth Ministry in Other Religions”

 **INTERVARSITY PRESS**

Visit
ivpress.com/media



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT:

Krista Carnet, broadcast publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kkcarnet@ivpress.com
 Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com
 Adrianna Wright, online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4096 or awright@ivpress.com
ivpress.com/praxis