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JEREMY BIXLER: Hello and welcome to Youth Ministry Academy Radio. We're sitting down today with NYI Global Director Gary Hartke. Gary, how are you doing today?

GARY HARTKE: Good, Jeremy. Thanks.

JB: First of all, Gary, before we move into our formal interview time, I just want to set the ground with what are some of your responsibilities here at NYI?

GH: My responsibility in NYI is I serve as the director of NYI. And my primary responsibilities are to coordinate and supervise youth ministry for the Church of the Nazarene. We currently have over 415,000 NYI members around the world. And so I work with a team here in the Global Ministry Center as well as our regional leaders around the world to shape youth ministry.

JB: All right. I want to start this interview by going a little bit into your past. And I want you to share with us if you can just what made you decide to go into youth ministry and describe some of that calling.

GH: Well, I was a college student and was feeling very unsettled. I was a pre-engineering major at Mount Vernon Nazarene University and preparing to transfer out to another school to finish my engineering degree. And was feeling very unsettled about the direction in life I was going. And in that time had gotten involved in local youth ministry. I had a pastor who was in one of my classes. And he invited me to come to his church on weekends just to help with the youth program. They had two or three youth in the church and so it was about 40 minutes away. So I got up on Sunday mornings and travelled down to this church and spent the day with the youth in that church. And over a period of months we

built up the youth ministry and discovered that I had a real passion for that that I didn't know I had. And that just seemed to be a good fruit from the ministry. And it's kind of like, it just got larger and larger and larger over time as I got more involved and one thing kind of led to the next. Kind of the open door concept, I guess, if you will. And so I kept walking and following those footsteps and I'm still here today.

JB: Now, did you switch the majors, then, from the pre-engineering to a ministry major?

GH: I did. I actually switched first to a music major. And I was in a travelling music group at the time and loved to sing. And then I got into class and couldn't read music and couldn't play any instruments and couldn't...I realized early on that there was a lot more to it than a vocal portion of it, so...but it was in a time where it was a clarifying process for me. I didn't grow up in the church and so I really didn't know how these things worked. I didn't know proper steps you should take, didn't know if God, you know, spelled out in the sky what you were supposed to do, or how do you discover what you're to do? In that process I talked to some of the, my friends and professors, and ultimately they said, "You know, you need to be a Christian Education major. And you have a passion for youth ministry." And I was encouraged that direction and signed up and finished with a Christian Education degree.

JB: Now, as you transitioned out of college, did you immediately go into a ministry assignment?

GH: I did. I interned at a church my junior year of college and the church I interned at, the youth pastor came to me the spring of next year and he was my youth pastor. His name was Dave Curtiss. And when I was a sophomore in high school he's the one that reached out to me, and because of his ministry I became a part of the church and a Christian. And so I interned with him my junior year in Dayton, Ohio - Dayton Beaver Creek Church - and

my senior year, about March or so, he came up to Mount Vernon and said, “Gary, I’m leaving, going to another church. And it’s close to summer. Why don’t you come and just, you know, be at the church for the summer. Don’t know what’ll happen after that, but just help them through the summer.” And so, I said, “Yes.” I was graduating in a couple months and had no place to go and so I actually started travelling on weekends down to the church and then when I graduated, I graduated one day and moved the next day to Beaver Creek and started as a kind of an interim youth pastor and ended up staying about three years.

JB: What were some important lessons that you learned in those first several years?

GH: Important lessons I learned. I think one lesson I learned is that a lot of what you were receiving in education at that time was methodology, theories, textbook type of youth ministry. And when I actually got in the local church, I realized people cared little about my theology, although it was important. They cared little about my methodology, what I knew about structure or theories or theology. They had some raw needs in their life. And so I learned that youth ministry, it’s a whole lot more about caring for people and helping them, shepherding them, than it is about applying the right theories at the right time, and walking with people and just, the journey that you have.

JB: What has changed in the past, since that time in the entire field of youth ministry do you feel?

GH: Yeah, when I started in youth ministry, the really important things I came at the very end of choir tours, and so having a mass youth choir and learning a musical and then taking that on tour in the summer was a big deal. Also, the badge of honor in those days was if you had a full calendar. And of course we didn’t have computers then, but you would copy

out your calendar and put some clip art on there and then fill it, you know, type in your events and white-out a few things and go back and type again. And then you photocopied the calendar and hoped it made it on people's refrigerator. And a full calendar was a badge of honor. And if you came up with some cute names along the way for your events and things, all the better. But there was a big focus on program, big focus on doing and not so much the being, and the doing *with* and *through*. It was more about doing ministry *for* and *to* youth. And so a lot has changed since, that's 25 years ago.

JB: What do you feel then is the reasoning for that shift from program-based to I'd say relationship-based nowadays?

GH: Yeah, very much relationship-based now. I think youth ministry has a broader perspective in that it's more family-oriented. When I started, we prided ourselves on being youth specialists, and...but now there's a much broader, a much more healthy concept of youth ministry that it's broader than just that young person. It's the family. But a high, a highly, one of the shifts that's come is from program to worship. When I started in youth ministry, there was, you know, you, a Wednesday night activity which was our main youth meeting, you started with some crowd breaker, some ice breaker. Usually you wound up embarrassing somebody in the process. The more embarrassing it was the more fun it was. And then, you know, you did a few things and put some overheads on the projector and sang a few silly songs that had no theological meaning. They were just fun. They usually had movements to them. And then you'd have a little bit of sharing and prayer, and then you gave a lesson or a message and you were done. In today's youth ministry, it's, I think there are a lot of changes. One is that it's more geared towards worship and the idea of the crowd breakers, ice breakers, and feeling like you have to

entertain the youth group is gone. And that's good. I think there's a more of a perspective where the youth worker's not the sole leader of the youth group, the pied piper as it were. But part of the youth worker's role is to mobilize other people into leadership, including the teenagers themselves. And so the youth worker is more of a catalyst today. And before, I would say the youth worker was a performer. And that's an important shift. I think now our youth ministry's much more prevalent. When I started there were a few youth workers and so today there's a much stronger network both formal and informal in youth ministry. Of course, the internet's played part of that, too. But youth ministry's informed in a much greater way today than back, back when I was a youth pastor in my early days. You were very much isolated, very much in a silo mentality in terms of youth ministry, where today I think there's a much broader feeling of connectedness and a desire to be part of a greater community than just your local church. And that's good for youth ministry.

JB: This may be a difficult question so I understand. This question that just came to me – do you see a somewhat similar shift coming in the next couple decades? Do you see, where you think youth ministry is leading to?

GH: I think the future of youth ministry is that it will broaden into more of a children's ministry. I think the studies show that, you know, when I started youth ministry there was a poster that was mailed to me one day. On there was printed these words: "85% of all people will come to Christ by the age of 18 or they never will." I put that poster on my wall. It was a real motivator for me. Of course in recent years, we've heard that has shifted down to 14 and now it's shifting to even younger. So I think youth ministry, we used to think of youth ministry as a gateway into the church. We were kind of the recruiting arm of the

church. We could get them in our youth group and then hopefully connect them for the rest of their life. You know, from what we're seeing today, at least in a USA context, is that they have to be reached at a younger age. So I think that changes the scope of youth ministry and should broaden youth ministry in the sense that there's more of a connection to children's ministry. There's a very thought-through strategy to connect the ministries and again integrate the two so that there's a smooth transition. I think world-wide the shift in youth ministry, I think, outside the USA/Canada, the world is naturally more relational. We tend in America, tend to be more structured, more calendered down to the minute, where around the world, it's just naturally more relational. So we're seeing good things in youth ministry around the world in terms of just the development of youth ministry in general, but also the planning of events like Youth Congresses, the development of Bible Quizzing, and various elements that have been used in the USA church for years is now taking root around the world. And of course, our ability to provide information via the internet, our ability to find people to help us with translation and the contextualization of materials is really advancing resources around the world which is very timely and good. So that'll build on the relational aspect that's already out there.

JB: Now, you started as NYI director in 2000, correct?

GH: In 2000.

JB: What led to that job shift?

GH: Well, I was a youth pastor 15 years and then my last assignment was at Chicago First Church. I was there eight years and the World Mission director came to me when I was there and said that World Mission had a desire to reach younger generation, both in

general in terms of World Mission, but also in terms of future missionaries and volunteers that would serve the church around the world. They knew that the paradigms were changing in terms of mission and that there was a desire for greater connection to youth. And so they, World Mission invited me to be the candidate coordinator, and I accepted that and was in that position two years and four months. And that assignment, though it wasn't directly youth ministry related, because of my youth ministry experience, I got involved in several areas related to youth ministry around the world. And it gave me an incredible glimpse of the church without people having any reason to think that they needed to inform me. I mean, I was a World Mission guy. I was the candidate coordinator. But, it gave me a really good glimpse of the church and some of the needs around the world, but also some of the good things around the world. Also, stepping out of youth ministry in the USA was healthy for me to really look at where we had been and where we were going. And so those two years and four months seemed kind of odd to me at the time. It was so different than what I'd done fifteen years. But then when I was elected into the position of NYI director, it all came together for me. My local district youth ministry experience, regional youth ministry experience, and then my role in World Mission was, I think, a good match for giving me, I think, a desire for world-wide youth ministry and somewhat of an understanding. At least I understood the issues. I didn't necessarily understand how to do world-wide youth ministry. But I had seen the complexities of trying to be a global church. I'd seen the struggles and the yearnings and some of the good intentions that went bad. And so I was able to use that coming in NYI to be, I wouldn't say better, but I was more aware. I knew that this was

going to be a complex journey and was ready for that. No quick fixes, no “we’ll decide this today and tomorrow will be different,” that would be a journey. And it has been.

JB: Very good. And before we wrap it up for the day, I want us to get a glimpse of the Gary Hartke outside of the Global Ministry Center. What are some of your hobbies and passions in your life away from your job?

GH: Outside of my job the things I enjoy to do, two things primarily. I really enjoy playing racquetball and try to play two or three times a week. And then also bicycling. I bicycle, try to do it at least once a week and more if I can. But, those two things in terms of recreation are things I really enjoy to do. Other than that, pretty normal guy. Work around the house, you know, do things that we have to do to survive. But those are a few of the things I enjoy.

JB: Real quick tell us about your family.

GH: My family. My wife is Joy. Her name is Joy. We’ve been married 25 years and we met at Mount Vernon and were married just after our college years. I have two children. I have a daughter, Mallory, who’s a senior at Olivet Nazarene University, and a son, Jeremy, who is a sophomore at MidAmerica Nazarene University.

JB: All right. Very good. And also tell us real quick about some of the places you’ve been on your bicycling journey.

GH: My bicycling journey mostly I’ve been around the local Kansas City area. But I’ve done two long rides across the state of Iowa which is about a 470-mile ride in seven days. And this summer I did it again. Our summer here being July. Did it in July. And actually did my first century which is a hundred miles in one day which was a pretty encouraging development for me. But this bike ride across Iowa is, you do it with 10,000 people. But

you sleep in fields and there's no electricity. You use generators and the water's carried in and it's pretty raw and rugged but a great time.

JEREMY BIXLER: Gary last time we spoke we kind of went along your timeline from the calling to ministry all the way up to the accepting of the Director of NYI position in 2000. My question for you then is we are currently almost, we're at nine years in, almost at the decade mark. How is NYI different today than it was when you came on board?

GARY HARTKE: Hi Jeremy. It's good to a part of this today and part of this interview and to share this time. NYI is very different today in a number of ways. The first thing I think of is the growth we've had in the last nine years. We've had nearly a quarter of our growth in these nine years, and that's been 100,000 members. So our emphasis on global ministry has resulted in many more NYI members. And we went from 300,000 members in 2000 to over 415,000 members today. Also, so that's exciting. There's a lot more members that are involved. NYI's different today in that there's a greater connection between language, languages and cultures. I think the world has become a smaller place, if you will. Some of the barriers that used to separate people have been broken down. The internet and some of the NYI events we've had around the world where people have been able to meet someone from another world area, the relational factor has really developed and so I, many places I go in the world, people will ask me if I know somebody from somewhere else in the world, and it just, it's very evident to me that there's a strong relational connection and a strong desire to be connected globally. I think another thing that's very different today is that we have a leadership structure that's across the world. We implemented this idea of a global NYI office and then regional NYI offices. And so, we developed a concept of having regional youth coordinators, that would be regional

youth pastors, if you will on a region. They in turn have developed field leaders, what we call field youth coordinators. And these groups of people make the ability to share information, to get information, to ask questions, to really be part of our strategy more realistic. You can't from one office do youth ministry around the world. But based on the structure we have, we have leaders throughout the world that are able to be involved in our strategy. So it's exciting to see today that with the 22,000 Nazarene churches around the world, we have a goal to have an NYI leader in every one of those churches. The 430 districts, we have a District NYI President for each one of those. For the 47 fields we have a field youth coordinator in place for those. For the seven regions we have leaders in place. So, it's been exciting to see the way the leadership structure has developed. So those are some exciting differences for us.

JB: How about from a program perspective? What have been some important programs that we've focused on in the last nine years?

GH: Programs we've focused on in the last nine years? I'd say the first thing that was an exciting development for us was the creation of a Third Wave event we call it. It's for emerging youth leaders. We had our first one in Quito, Ecuador in 2004. We had 163 leaders from 44 countries of the world. And it was an incredible gathering that not only for the days we were there but since then, the impact of that. We had a second one in 2007. We had 225 young leaders from 55 countries of the world. And so this event has been one of the exciting program changes. We've also been developing a worldwide training strategy. Just this past June with the launch of Youth Ministry Academy, which we're doing this podcast through today, has been a result of a desire for really a call from youth leaders around the world saying, "We need training." And I remember being in one meeting in

Guatemala several years ago and we were talking about this concept of worldwide training. And one of the members spoke up in that meeting and said, “You know, I’m a lay youth worker. I have a regular job, but I’m a volunteer at my church. I’ll never be a paid youth pastor here. We don’t have paid youth pastors here. And so I’ll never be one. But I want you to train me as if I will be.” And that really lit a fire in me that day to, and it’s been echoed around the world. People who say, “You know, you know, I may not ever get paid for this, but I want to be trained like I am. I want to be a professional. I want to do the best job I can for the Lord.” And so the development of Youth Ministry Academy, I think, has been the biggest thing for NYI and we just launched it in June and are in the beginning stages, but I think there’re going to be great results that come in the church because of this training strategy. We have a lot to learn, but it’s off to a good start and been another great program development for us.

JB: Very good. Being global director of NYI takes you obviously all around the world. If you could share with us a few stories or recounts of different places that this position has taken you and the exciting places you’ve been.

GH: I’ve been a part of a number of events around the world. I’ve been experiencing places like in the Dominican Republic a few years back. There was a youth conference there and it was in a village where there was no Church of the Nazarene. And after a day of serving in the community and inviting people to come to a service that night, I watched as people came and responded to the gospel message there. And the District Superintendent stood up at the end, saying, “You know. Based on all the people that have responded tonight, we have no church here, but if you’ll come Sunday morning and meet me, we’re going to start a church.” And it was our youth that had done this just through their servanthood

and their obedience and faithfulness. But I've been to a lot of areas. I've been to areas where NYI is very developed and we have all the structure in place and all the programs in place and that's exciting for me to see. I've been to places in the world where the NYI is very mature. I've been in places in the world where the church is new and they're discovering ways to do NYI, to do youth ministry, and I'm glad that we're part of a church that believes in youth ministry and because of that we have an NYI. And everywhere you go around the world, youth ministry is a part of the language of the church. And so we have a great opportunity, but a great responsibility to be part of that process. So I've been, I think, around thirty-seven countries of the world in nine years, and from a variety of cultures, a variety of experiences, a variety of reasons for going, but it's all been incredible.

JB: Now part of the global strategy of NYI is to conduct youth ministry in seven different world regions. In your travels and in your personal experience of the world regions, how is youth ministry different, for example, in Eurasia as compared to Asia-Pacific, Mexico and Central America compared to the Caribbean, and so on?

GH: One of the major differences is that you, when you begin to add hurdles such as language barriers, history between countries that may serve on the same region, a bad history, when you begin to look at the religious beliefs of various countries, could get very complex. So, you could go to some regions of the world like Mexico and Central America and you'll find that Spanish language works fairly well through the entire region. And so NYI's very developed there. There've been fewer hurdles, fewer slow-downs. So the advancement's been quickly, done quickly. It's easy to pull leaders together. It's a small region geographically so the cost of getting leaders together is less.

Having regional youth congresses are more successful because it's small geographically. And so, you contrast Mexico and Central America region with one like Asia-Pacific where you have multiple languages, multiple religious beliefs, multiple histories, multiple levels of access to communication, great expanse of distance between countries. There are just a lot of hurdles there, a lot of barriers there. And so you just can't drop in and begin youth ministry. You have to work through language issues and cultural issues and even access into some countries. And it can take a much longer period of time. And so there are a lot of unique challenges that way for us.

JB: One of the features of the Youth Ministry Academy is the production of monthly topics where we'll just focus on one topic in our articles and our resources on the site. And for the month of October we're looking at global ministry. And so, Gary, I wanted to ask you regarding this topic why is it even important, for example, a youth in America to know what's going on around the world in ministry?

GH: You know, it's interesting. In the church and outside the church there's a desire of young people in particular, younger generations, to have this worldwide connection. And so it's been exciting to kind of ride that wave of momentum in that in the church we have people who really desire to be a global ministry, to be connected globally. So I think it's important because we, it's something that young people gravitate to. I think it's important because there's a lot of encouragement that comes as our leaders around the world realize they're not alone. There's resources that come from that, ideas that we're able to share, sometimes even financial support that one country might give to another, one group would give to another group. And so we're able to share resources that way. We're able to provide material much more broadly and the impact of everything we do can be greater

because there's more people that can implement it and use it. And so, and also our strategies. We have three course strategies in NYI – evangelism, discipleship, leadership development. People around the world don't have to figure out what to do. We as a movement, as an NYI have identified these strategies over the years and they're still good. And so we can, without knowing a language, without knowing a culture, without knowing any of the history of the country, we can say in your context work on evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development along with some other tools that support those concepts. And we know that they'll build a healthy holistic youth ministry, or at least have the raw components to do that. And so, I think churches know that what they do is sound and what they do is right because they're not the only one thinking that, but it's part of a large group of people in the church who have said these are important things to us. And so we have a lot of minds that contribute, a lot of voices that contribute to what we do. So our final product, what gets shaped, is much more powerful.

JB: And finally today, what are some practical ways, then, for local youth ministries and local leaders and youth to become acquainted and become aware of this global economy that we live in?

GH: How do they become aware of the global economy we live in? I think probably the use of the internet is the greatest resource. The NYIToday.org website links to our regional websites which can provide a lot of information that way. I think really it's being aware because there's a lot of information out there. And if you're aware and you have access to information, it's easy to find. And I think today as being global citizens, part of our responsibility is to be aware, and it's to learn, and it's to know what's happening around the world. And sometimes that means doing something to change that, another part of the

world, but I think many times it means reorienting our lifestyle so that we're positioned to be able to help somebody else. And I think, I live in America, you live in America, and here we've been very consumeristic. Let's spend more than we have. And so that really stifles our ability to be happy people, number one. We're stressed out, we're worried, we're, because we've not organized our lives so that we're in a position to really be blessed and to bless others. And I don't mean a financial blessing, but I mean having an ability to, you know, share your resources beyond yourself. And I think, hopefully, the world doesn't follow the American model of consumerism and that we all become people who live well within our financial means so that we can be a people who share what we have with someone else.

JEREMY BIXLER: Gary, in our two parts of our interviews so far we've talked about some of your personal journey, some of global issues of what's going on in this world and specifically for the global ministry of Nazarene Youth International. Recently we had the 2009, the General Assembly, the Global Convention of NYI. Give us a summary of what happened, what took place, and some of the benefits to come from that.

GARY HARTKE: We're just a few months away from that convention. And it's really been an incredible event for us. I think to start answering the question about what was the global convention like in 2009, I'd have to go back probably twelve years to 1997. I was a delegate in that convention. And we had over 100 resolutions that came to the floor of that convention. Too many resolutions for us to handle in the time that we had as a convention. And we realized something needed to change in NYI. There were several resolutions, for example, related to what should the age focus of NYI be? And it was evident that there was no one good answer for the world. In one place they wanted 12-40,

in another 12-30, in another place 12-18, in another place 12-23. It was obvious there was no agreement and it was whoever's going to get the most votes, you know, became policy for everybody. We left that convention with a yearning for something greater. And Fred Fullerton was the director during that time and worked with NYI over that quadrennium to really transform our look. And they came back in 2001, which I was director by then but I had nothing to do with it; I was actually shocked to see what had developed because I was out of NYI for two years and really once you're out of it, you're out of it. I wasn't really clued in to what was happening, but they had rewritten the constitution so that it would become flexible, adaptable, and could be modified. And part of that was the age focus, using that example. So now we set an age focus in our NYI plan, but it could be modified around the world through a process. That was a genius move on behalf of Fred, the global NYI council, and the delegates to the 2001 convention. We voted it in. That launched for us, I shouldn't say launched, that continued a passion for global ministry. I inherited it; I didn't start it. I just was incredibly glad to be part of it. I didn't know it was happening and it was there when I started. And so that resulted in a new charter ministry plan which is our constitution. Then in 2005, the delegates gathered there. When we were going into the event we had 1,001 delegates registered at one time. A week before the event we had 838. When we got to the site, there were 612. The missing 200+ delegates, because we do a delegate seating chart, everybody's assigned so the delegates can communicate with each other and, you know, we know where a delegate's at if we need to get them. The mass of the 200 that were absent happened to be in the middle of the seating area. And so the visual for us was very discouraging. We had these great assembly of delegates – 612 – but there was this hole in the middle. And coinciding with

that happening was a resolution that came to expand our convention world wide. Well, it passed very, I don't think it was unanimous, but very close, it passed and with much excitement. So we worked over the last four years to expand our convention world wide. It ended up that we had eight sites – seven outside of USA/Canada, one in the USA/Canada. We video conferenced two way to each location. Every delegate received the same information, the same bag, the same notebook, the same materials. We worked much further in advance to get these materials distributed around the world. We wanted it, in fact we more than wanted it, we made sure everything was fair and equitable, that no delegate had anything another delegate couldn't have. So that meant a lot of sacrifice in the convention. We went with a different plan in terms of programming, in terms of what we gave away to delegates. Because if we couldn't do it world wide, we weren't going to do it at all. It was an incredible gathering. We went from 612 delegates in 2005 to 713 at, in June of 2009. So we increased by 101. It showed us that it could work. The video conferencing worked really well. We had a backup plan that if the video conferencing went down there was an audio backup. If that went down we had a plan to use land line phones. If that went down we had a plan to use cellular phones, mobile phones. We never had to get past the audio. We were able to use the video, and in some cases audio, but our sites around the world submitted their votes via the internet while our delegates in Orlando voted. They all had the same voting cards, the same ballots. And it was exciting to be a part of. We did our, conducted our elections world wide. We conducted the business of resolutions world wide. We did it all world wide. And during our services we actually took our services world wide in that various components of the services were led in these other sites. And it was just incredible. And we're looking

already to 2013 and what this will develop into. Technology will improve. Hopefully the ability to travel and in just getting the word out to our delegates around the world that the visa issues and some of the monetary issues that prevented them from coming in the past that we work to resolve that, to minimize that, so that they can join in at one of these other locations and it's just not to look on. It's just not symbolic. It's full participation. And that's exciting to be part of.

JB: That's awesome. Very good news. Then coming out of the convention and the General Assembly, we currently, it's currently October, 2009. That was in June. So what is currently going on at NYI around the world?

GH: NYI around the world. One of the exciting things is that within the next two years six of our seven regions will have a regional youth conference. At least they're working towards that end. They may not all be able to do that because of various reasons, but at this date six of the seven regions are planning on a regional youth conference. The Africa region, Caribbean, Eurasia, Mexico and Central America, South America, and the United States and Canada. It'll be the first time in history that Africa will have had a regional youth conference. That's exciting. We're also working on our third Third Wave event for emerging youth leaders. It'll be in Bangkok, Thailand the fourth through the ninth of January, 2011 with a heavy emphasis there on being a part of the culture there in Thailand and being students of that part of the world to learn about Thailand and the South Asia field but also how we can be part of ministry there. And so, very excited about that. Another development for us with our website, we've implemented a translation feature where in the past we had three websites – one in Spanish, Portuguese, and English. And we had to physically translate material within that. It was very time

consuming, very labor intensive. Now we've incorporated a language tool and it does automatic translation as long as it's text and so our websites are very much text so it can be translated. The documents that are theologically, or theological in nature, or are critical to NYI to some fashion, we structure those so they can't be translated via text because we want them to be translated by a human and therefore be translated theologically sound and incorporate information that doesn't confuse our leaders. So, we have a good web strategy there. I think another thing we'll begin to see around the world through Youth Ministry Academy is the delivery, more structured training. I think many of our leaders around the world are dependent on just searching for whatever is out there, whatever they can get for free. And now through our organized training strategy, very soon they'll be able to attend a training event somewhere and actually get specific training in youth ministry that will help them. So, exciting things in NYI.

JB: In a previous section of this interview we talked about the future of youth ministry in general, and we've also talked about the past and the present of our brand of youth ministry NYI for the Church of the Nazarene. And so one of our final questions for this interview is what is the big picture? Where are we going toward as NYI far off in the future, decades? What are we looking for an eventual destination?

GH: An eventual destination for NYI? It's an exciting thing to think about. I think if you would go back 25 years and ask people that question, they would never dream we are where we are today. So I think first we have to position ourselves to be facilitators and good stewards of that future. What that means to me is not getting stuck in tradition. I think we have to make some tough decisions as a church and as NYI to do the right things to facilitate the development of youth ministry. Not stagnate, not stifle, but to position

ourselves so that the future can be what God wants the future to be. I think right now for the last several years NYI has been, you know, if I painted a visual picture, it's been as if we're trying to get this thing moving. You know, we had some great ideas. We had some dreams. But how do you do global ministry? How do you implement a global structure? How do you have NYC's around the world? How do you develop a system of training? How do you develop a system where resources can be shared through our program like Mission Offering Project, we call "Jesus for a New Generation"? How do you do that? And so we've been in this discovery phase, and it's been messy. There've been many times in my nine years we've taken four steps forward and then we've had to turn around and take four steps back, sometimes six steps back. And it's been messy. But what I like about NYI and something that I hope I never lose is this sense of yearning for something that we're not. It's becoming something we know we need to become. We're not sure quite what it is, but we know it's out there. For the immediate future for us I think that means the development of leadership around the world. We don't want people being reliant on programming, reliant on a strategy that we offer because we know that it's different everywhere you go. And so preparing people to be strategists, preparing people so that they could take principles and implement them in a contextual way and an appropriate way is where we need to be. So NYI, if you look at the NYI office, where our NYI team serves, we will move more from people who try to initiate things which we've been in for the last several years to more of a resource, more of a connecting point around the world, facilitating what's happening around the world, advocating for the needs that are around the world. But we won't need to be initiators. We'll be people who discover what the needs are based on the things that have been initiated. And we'll be able to

respond to those needs. And I think that's going to be an exciting place. I think our world will be much better connected and so our role will be to help connect the world together so that the ideas that are shared, the information that's learned doesn't just come from the NYI office but comes from other world areas. So I think in the future, youth ministry will be one that has leadership that's engaged like never before and that leadership will really embrace that evangelism, discipleship leadership development model and will know how to incorporate that into their ministry. And then as a result we'll be stronger and more informed, but more connected to people.

JB: And finally today, Gary, how best can we pray for NYI, not both in the office in the Global Ministry Center, but NYI around the world?

GH: I think for NYI around the world, we, the first thing I go to is that, you know, we are a starting place for many leaders. It's, for many people, it's the first opportunity they've had to be in a significant leadership role. So there's fear that comes with that. I think there's a level of more than fear, a question of ability. You know, "God, do you really want me to do this? You know, I'm not the best person for this. Surely there's somebody else that can do better." Youth ministry can be intimidating because it's such a challenging role. There's a lot of expectation on a youth worker. And so I think the prayer would be that people have that bold step to get involved. I think that first step of just saying, "You know what? I want to do this." And getting involved, finding a place of ministry, finding a place of service, and getting involved is that first critical step. And I think that's what we need to pray for. Once they make that step I think they discover, and as they discover the resources and the people that could help them. It gets better from there. I think praying for leaders to get involved, and when I say leaders I'm talking about

teenagers, or young people through adults. We really look for an intergenerational model. I think beyond that a prayer that youth ministry is still around the world the best place to reach people. In the USA we know that the evangelism models need to be integrated more for a younger age group, but around the world teenagers, young people, are still the prime area of life for us to be evangelistic and to reach into their lives and to connect them to God and to the church. So I think the prayer for our leaders is to have that expansive vision that we, we're not complete yet. We're not done yet. There's more to do. And having this outward focus, rather, it's easy to turn inward as a youth ministry and the focus because there are enough needs in a youth group just to focus on yourself. I think Jesus with his disciples could have spent a whole lot more time focusing on the needs of the disciples because as you read scripture they were needy people. But He didn't. He pushed them outward. And I think that's a great model for us is to keep pushing outward even when maybe we don't feel adequate, don't feel like we are the right person that we do that. So, I would pray for that. I would pray, I think young people are in that lifetime decision-making point of life. The decisions they're making have life-long consequences and so they're very important decisions of life. And we need to, as a church, recognize that and really have a passion for intervening in the lives of young people to help them make decisions that are Christ-honoring and minimize the long-term damage in their life. But not just to protect them, it's to help them to be all God wants them to be. So, those are things I would pray for.