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## *Youth*

In many churches, the youth ministry holds a prominent position. In fact, many choose the church they attend on the basis of how big the youth ministry is. Many churches now have “Youth Pastors”.

### **Superficial Appearances**

In our desire to see a good program for children, we’re quick to accept help from any offer.

I remember my youth, and how important the fellowship with other Christian youth was to me. I appreciated the adults who took a special interest in us so we could get together and do things. Getting together, however, isn’t the most important consideration. One is the issue of calling. The other is the quality of the person who takes on such ministry. Just like the selection of elders, the persons to take on such leadership roles must be true men and women of God.

I’m sorry to have to say it, but I’m afraid many youth leaders are the kind of people that we should least trust with our children. They might say the right thing to parents, but their spirit is all wrong. Some take on the position because they’re really immature people who don’t want to grow up. They lead the youth so they can continue to play, like they were still youth

themselves. The added danger, is that now they're the adults, they get to be the leader who gets to tell the rest of the "kids" what to do. They have the guaranteed boss position. These are true wasters of the precious time youth have in getting prepared for a God-focused life. Some might even use a "Sunday School" type lesson regularly, **but that doesn't spell LIFE!** Only those who truly know the fear of the Lord can walk in life and help the youth. You might conclude that someone like "The Pastor" would be ideal for this position. Beware! Some so called "Pastors" are truly NOT QUALIFIED! They take on the position of the "Pastor" in a church. They start dreaming of a Youth Ministry. They endeavor to start one. The adults think, "Who could be more qualified?" Take heed! Look carefully. A godly "Pastor" should have a keen sense of burden for the congregation. Does he satisfy himself that the reason the congregation isn't on fire is because the people are lazy or something? If such is the case, and he's able to write off the failure in the congregation so easily, take heed. Such doesn't have the kind of heart to be a Youth Leader. *His spirit is wrong!* Only one who has a burden that doesn't excuse coldness among the adults could be qualified to lead the youth.

The second kind to beware of, are the psychologizers. Such as these have trained themselves well with psychology. Psychology is **another gospel**. These people are certainly not prepared for leading the youth. Only those well founded on the word, rejecting the new gospels that arise, are qualified to lead the youth.

## **Young Peoples**

Having read a lot of the Bernard Palmer books for youth, I'm familiar with a gathering they used to have. In the Danny Orlis Series that Palmer wrote, the youth used to go to what they called, "Young Peoples". These youth got other youth to go to the meetings. They were meetings that really challenged the youth. Sometimes a missionary, or the like, would come and talk with them about serving the Lord or going to a Bible School

after High School. The Young People's supervisor was really equipped to help the youth in their walk with God. He wasn't just a chaperone of sorts. The youth got challenged in their walk with Christ and they got biblical guidance in facing the issues in their lives. This is the kind of leader that's needed for youth. This is the type of gathering we need to see orchestrated for our youth. This is also the type of gathering the youth that have a heart for God WANT to have. If we're not on fire for God and love Him, we can't provide it for our youth.

There are those who want to water down the time with the youth too much. They think all activity must be fun and games. Camping trips are fine, but Christ should always be the focus. Remember this important verse in connection with working with the youth:

*15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* *Ephesians 5:15-17*

We cannot afford to loose precious time with the youth in perpetual frivolities. They need to be prepared to stand faithful for Christ. They also need to be instructed as to what the Bible says in direction for their lives and behavior.

I was listening to the testimony of a young man at a Vacation Bible School evening outreach barbecue. His church would send the youth to one of four different missionary outreaches every summer. This young man had already served in Mexico one summer and had attended Christian retreats in the past. His tale told of how he would get on fire for Jesus at these different events, but come the return home, the fire would die. He would get caught up in the world again until the next outreach or camp, and he was fired up again. His testimony spoke of no victory, nor of any knowledge of how to stay on fire for Jesus. This group of youth were staying at the church during the Vacation Bible School week. This young man brought along his copy of Harry Potter for reading. A book full of witchcraft. No wonder he found no lasting victory in his walk with Jesus. What's more

shameful, is that the adult leadership didn't teach him concerning such spiritual dangers. Hopefully such a view can help us to tremble at the potential of success and failure that lies before us in training our youth for Christ, **while there's still time!**

## **In Training**

We need to also consider that the work that's done with the youth is also for the purpose of training them how to be godly adults. The standards have to demonstrate appropriate behavior to them NOW!

I can think of two example areas:

### **APPROPRIATE CLOTHING**

The first can be seen in appropriate clothing. I remember going to a church garage sale, and one of the women attendees was trying to push a skimpy bikini on a mother for her little daughter. The woman from the church said it was so cute. I was disgusted! It's indecent for Christian women to go around in public in a bikini, but here we see women thinking it's OK for the girls to do so. When they do this, they're preparing them for adulthood. Those girls will grow up thinking such clothing is appropriate. Education in appropriate modesty needs to start in their youth. I've also seen the church girls, who are just reaching young womanhood, wearing skirts WAY TOO SHORT! Who's to blame? The parents. After that, the youth leaders, who should be covering such issues with the youth to start with.

### **APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP**

The second example had to do with the proper roles of leadership. I remember a pastor's wife who commented that she had appointed a particular girl to teach the youth in their youth group. She said she was a good teacher, so gave her that position. This is a dangerous practice. While it's all right for a woman to teach the boys, it's a terrible practice to take a girl out of the group and set her up in a place of authority over the boys.

That's teaching that the women can teach the men. That will certainly make it hard for them to understand why, as adults, they can't also sit under a girl/woman their own age. This violates the spirit of training and prepares for a truly messed up perspective of biblical roles for the men and women.

## The Youth Leaders

There are whole books on the subject of youth ministries. Like I said, there are specially trained "Youth Pastors" in many churches. Specially trained or not, the need for leaders over youth has to be in the area of calling. The calling, not of the individual's liking, but of a discernment and evaluation of the person on biblical lines and spiritually perceived. The calling has to be God's. The discernment has to be carefully sought. The appointment needs to be by the body, not by some single "Pastor" who runs the show. Look at this appointment of Barnabas and Saul:

*2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. 4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, . . .* Acts 13:2-4a

The local church received the commission for Barnabas and Saul as commanded by the Holy Ghost. The church showed their active part in this process in fasting, praying and laying their hands upon them. The laying on of their hands showed a charge and joining with them in their sending forth these men. The same needs to go for all such leadership. The church needs to be involved in calling out the leaders and commissioning them after carefully waiting upon God.

There also needs to be the careful separation of a woman leader to deal with the female youth and a man for training the male youth. With the development into adults, there needs to be special care to not bring up an occasion for charges of misconduct. Such ministries need to operate carefully to be above such reproach or the possible charge of some kind of misconduct.

Our society has become lax in handling such separation, but the carelessness has reaped many occasions of slander. Take care to manage such youth groups in a manner bringing honor to the Lord, and lead the next generation into a powerful stand for what's right and against what's wrong.