

Ten Attitudes Youth Directors Should Adopt in Their Churches

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- 1. Start cleaning toilets, it isn't below you.** When you are the youth director, your job description gets piled on. Because many youth directors are young, they get lots of physically taxing jobs, and an assortment of others just for fun. Running the video projector in worship, driving the church bus, and even cleaning toilets. But cleaning toilets isn't below you (I cleaned one at summer camp!) Count it a joy to be counted worthy to do even mundane tasks for The Lord because as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15.58 says, "So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless."
- 2. Accepting false blame can work to your advantage.** "What?" you say. "Why would being falsely blamed be good?!" Most things that get broken get blamed on the youth of the church anyway. That's just the way things go, but use this to your advantage. Use this as a tool to recruit more sponsors, more space, and more financial resources to adapt to your expanding ministry. Accept the false blame and take it on the chin. Allow wrongs to come your way and rejoice like the disciples did in Acts 5.41, "The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus."
- 3. Fill the pews with students that dress like it's Halloween, but it's gonna you get you in trouble!** You've seen those kids with spiky hair, leather jackets and pierced tongues? Well those are just the kind of kids I believe Jesus would hang out with the most. And those are the exact students you need in your church. Invite them in, put them in the front pew, and wait for the poop to hit the fan. Then you will have a chance to talk about the parable Jesus taught in Matthew 22.8-10. "The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren't worthy of the honor. Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.' So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests. This will challenge the church to view sinners through God's eyes rather than our own.
- 4. Don't work eight hours a day in the office, it will greatly diminish your effectiveness.** The myth of religious productivity tells us that if you remain at your desk, in an office, you will be an effective youth director. I don't know why we still listen to this 1950's bit of nonsense. Jesus certainly didn't stay in the Temple and neither should you remain in your office. The young people we are called to love are outside the walls of the church and remaining inside for 40 hours a week will undoubtedly diminish the souls you win for Christ. Matthew 9.35 says, "Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness."
- 5. Realize that social media isn't as social as you might imagine.** It's a false belief that as we stay connected on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, we are actually building relationships with students. This is simply untrue. Our teenage generation will one day awaken to social awkwardness as they attempt to have conversations with a human face rather than a computer screen. Social media is great for getting ideas started, generating conversations, and promoting events. But loving people means meeting them face to face. Social media lacks the personal touch while giving the impression that we are creating intimacy through texting. As Paul said in Romans 1.11-12, "For I long to see you so I can

bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours."

6. **Take a risk because friendship evangelism just works.** Youth directors, remember building your program takes time. Just as I believe our pastors should remain in appointments longer to instill trust within local congregations, so youth directors need time to build trust among students and families. The average stay of a youth director is 18 months, which is foolishness. Don't ask God, "What's next?" Rather ask God, "What's now?" Be present where you are and grow up that which God has begun in your midst. Befriend students, go to games, show up at school lunches, and serve students and their families. Don't give a guilt trip for non-youth-group-attenders. Love students as Christ loved the Church. Mark 10.45, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."
7. **Cross the generation gap because seniors in your church really do want you to succeed.** A common misunderstanding among youth directors is that seniors don't want kids around. Whereas not many people enjoy screaming kids running in the sanctuary and church halls, older people love children. I know it's hard to believe, but these seniors were once children themselves! Older people see the future of the church by looking at the youth and children. This is one reason why we see so many youth and children's buildings being constructed in our churches. Seniors are the top financial givers and prayer warriors in our churches. Seek their help in helping reach more students for Christ. 2 John 1.4 says, "It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us."
8. **Spend more than you budget.** If anyone told you I wrote this, I'm denying it right off! Now I speak from experience of someone who inadvertently spends more than I take in. (And I often get in trouble for it.) I don't do it on purpose, but sometimes I do it *because* of my purpose. It's my goal to reach youth for Christ and to provide opportunities for youth groups to attend events that help them grow in their love for Jesus. Is there any better investment than this? Save money on clergy moving expenses and spend it on the kids! If God tells me not to put a limit on a retreat and 400 students show up -- even knowing I am going to end up in the red -- I still do it. Why? Because I want to get in trouble? Heck no! I do it because I am called to echo the words of Jesus in Matthew 28.19-20 when he said, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you." I believe every soul is worth more than the money it takes to save that soul.
9. **Accept that Jesus cares much more about your students than you do.** It's hard to believe for a youth director that someone could love your kids as much as you do, but Jesus does. He loves those students way more than we could ever hope to or imagine. He knows their sins, their faults and their failures. He cares for their needs, for the alcoholic dad and the non-attentive mom. Often my heart breaks over the pain in the lives of students that I meet. And when I hear their stories, I just want to take them home. But the Good News of the Gospel is this -- "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." John 3.16. God loves our students way more than we do!

10. **Don't try to save the world or you'll get a messianic complex.** Sometimes youth ministry is tiring. We are underpaid and overworked. We are the low man (or woman) on the totem pole. We get the smallest office (which is good!) and we often feel misunderstood (which is bad.) And on top of that, our flock is a bunch of passion-filled, hormone-driven, adrenaline-filled-junkies who want to change the world and expect us to help! We put pressure on ourselves to be extra holy, truly sanctified, and Biblical experts. But the truth of the matter is this -- there is one Savior, and we aren't it. Admitting our faults and acknowledging our weakness only makes us rely upon The Lord even more. As 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "Each time Jesus said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."