

MAINTAINING A HEART FOR PARENTS

Malachi 4:6 – *“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”*

In youth work, it is important to remember that first of all, God has given the primary authority over children to their parents. He did not place the youth pastor or the youth worker in this position. Secondly, the church exists to support and help families. In youth work, the primary responsibility is to come along side the parents and be a source of support and help they would not find elsewhere. In the youth ministry, the role of the parent cannot diminish in our minds. Our ministry to the parents is perhaps as great as our ministry to the teens themselves.

1. The youth ministry exists to support parents.

Never allow criticism of parents or parental authority within our group. Under no circumstances should criticism of any parent fall from the lips of a single youth worker. Wholeheartedly support parental authority in the lives of our teenagers.

2. The youth ministry exists to help parents.

This simply means if a parent expresses a certain desire or wish for the life of his teen, it is the youth worker’s job to help see that it takes place. If a parent asks us to keep an eye on his teenager or to keep him away from a certain crowd, it is our duty to help and support in that way. This may mean, at times, going against the grain of the group or even being thought of badly by the teenagers. To allow ourselves to become a wedge between the parents and the teens is doing more damage to the home and to the church than we will ever know.

3. The youth ministry exists to love and encourage the parents.

Many times parents will be discouraged and frustrated at the direction or problems their teenager is facing. It is the youth worker’s job to be a constant source of encouragement and edification. Don’t pass a parent without stopping and speaking, shaking hands or expressing some thoughtfulness. Parents have entrusted us to influence their teenagers, and it is imperative that to have their support and confidence. It is important that we communicate with them as to what problems are developing and how their teens are doing.

Because of this important parent/youth worker relationship, never promise a teenager that you will not tell his parents about something. If a teenager expresses something that needs to be dealt with, you are duty bound as a youth worker, to share that problem with the youth pastor and then that it be taken to the parents. If a teenager ever asks you to promise not to tell his parents, simply say, “I’m sorry, I can’t do that, but I will do my best to help with whatever the problem is.”

4. The youth ministry exists to build the relationship between the teenagers and the parents.

It is interesting today how many parents fall into the state of neglect when it comes to the relationship with their teenagers. This happens because of the many demanding priorities of life, whether they be career or otherwise. It is also interesting how teenagers seem to never want to spend time with their families. They seem to always want to be in their room or away with their friends. Yet, in the heart, every parent desperately needs a close relationship with his or her teenager and every teenager desperately needs a close relationship with his or her parents.

It is the youth worker's responsibility to first remind the parents of their need for a close relationship with their teens and then to instill in the teens a love and appreciation for their parents. Constantly strive to build a relationship between parents and teens.

A teenager who grows up without a close relationship with his parents will face many struggles and heartaches that could be avoided. When in the presence of teens, always build up the parents, and always encourage a close relationship with the teens when speaking to parents.

5. The youth ministry exists to maintain close communication with the parents.

It is important to work together, as a team, in communicating with the parents of our teens. In a given week, many of us will bump into the parents of the teenagers. Use this time to communicate the direction of the group and their teenagers. Use this time to be a help and encouragement and find out if there is anything that can be done for them.

When dealing with a specific teen, you may see needs and problems of which the parents are unaware. There may also be godly character traits developing of which the parents are unaware. It is important to take time to communicate these areas to the parents. Stay in close contact and build relationships with the parents of the teenagers.

Before befriending the teens, help them grow spiritually. The youth workers are a part of the army in the fight for their lives. It is our job to communicate with the parents and the pastor to ensure a right direction for their lives. Please don't ever let a personal relationship with the teenagers keep you from being what they need, spiritually, in directing and helping them follow a proper direction.

In this area of communication it is also important to communicate the details of the actual youth program. It is important that the parents know the time, cost, location and details of each of the activities. If everyone works as a team in

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communicating with the parents, we will have fewer times of offense and criticism. This will also build a confidence with the parents that will eventually allow the young people greater freedom to participate in the youth program.

