

A HEART FOR PLEASING GOD

II Tim. 2:4 - *“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”*

INTRODUCTION:

According to I Corinthians 9:27, Paul's greatest fear was that he, himself, would be a castaway. As a youth worker, let this always be your greatest fear; that when you have tried to influence the lives of others, taught Sunday school lessons, given challenges, preached messages, that you, yourself, should be a castaway. Let us dedicate ourselves to staying right with God and maintaining hearts to please Him. May the passion of your heart be to please Him in everything you do. Nothing else really matters.

I. Be committed to hard work (I Tim. 4:10)

The word labor, in this verse, carries with it the idea of hard work. Please be aware that working with the teenagers will not be easy. I laugh when I think of many people's opinions of youth work. To many people it is nothing more than a trip to the zoo, beach or a theme park followed by an overnight trip with a lot of fun and games. But realize, as youth workers, ours is not to have fun, though we will have some, ours is to work hard at building lives. Realize that everything we do, whether it's blowing up rafts, buying cokes, popping popcorn or setting up chairs, is for the purpose of building the lives of teens.

You, as the volunteer staff of the youth group, are extremely important. You are unsung heroes of the faith to come along side of your pastor and youth pastor and help influence teenagers for years to come. Please be aware that the youth ministry will, at times, be physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually draining and demanding and, as you develop a heart for pleasing the Lord, please be committed to hard work.

II. Dare to face opposition (I Tim. 4:10)

The word "strive" in this verse really means “hand to hand combat with no thought of retreat.” As a youth worker, you must realize that you are in a battle for lives and, because you work with teens, you will, at times, come into conflict, face very controversial issues and will have to literally do spiritual battle for the lives of these kids. As a youth worker, you will touch the lives of teens who have dealt with the realities of divorce, abuse, immorality, drugs, alcoholism and many other hard situations and family problems. Many times you will literally have to battle to pull these kids through, spiritually.

Please realize that Satan is in an active campaign to destroy the lives of every teenager in our youth group, from those who are the most spiritual to those who

are newly saved. We are here to fight for their lives. We must be youth workers with the commitment of Daniel, who would not defile himself. We must be dedicated to standing up for the truth and right and we must be aware that it will inevitably lead to some conflict and spiritual battle.

III. Show yourself as an example (I Tim. 4:12)

Realize that before the teenagers hear what you say, they will imitate what you do. This verse lists five specific areas in which we are to be examples.

1. The way we talk (in word).
2. The way we live (in conversation).
3. The way we relate to others (in charity).
4. The way we relate to God (in spirit, in faith).
5. The way we relate to members of the opposite sex (in purity).

Please realize that our teenagers will reflect their leaders. How sobering it is to think that the teenagers we seek to influence will probably never achieve a higher level of spiritual commitment than what they see in our own lives. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul said, *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."* Please make your life such an example so that you could say, "Please imitate me," and in saying that, you can be sure that God would be pleased.

IV. Live for the purpose of communicating truth (I Tim. 4:13)

In working with teenagers, it is our responsibility to take the truth of God's Word and vividly live it before them and then to communicate it, in word, to them. Realize that everything we do at every activity and every scheduled youth meeting somehow boils down to the purpose of communicating truth. Whatever your role may be, you are here for the purpose of communicating truth through your life and words.

Please take each and every opportunity that you are with our teenagers to communicate some truth to them. Please be a shining testimony, outwardly in your life and actions, of the truth of God's Word, and please use your tongue to edify, teach, instruct and encourage the teens every time you are with them. Your presence at every youth activity or meeting allows God a little greater voice to a generation that so badly needs to found their lives upon Him and His Word. Everything you do communicates something. Please be sure that, in your actions and words you are communicating truth.

V. View the ministry for what it is - a gift (I Tim. 4:14)

As a youth worker, you have been given a priceless gift and privilege. This privilege is to invest yourself into the lives of others. The parents of our church family have entrusted us with their most precious possession - their teenagers. Please realize that you have been given a high calling and gift that is not to be taken lightly. Please guard, respect and carefully look after your gift. So many

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youth pastors and workers have been disqualified through personal compromise and the squandering of this gift. A servant who has a heart for pleasing the Lord will recognize the priceless gift that he has been given and then will guard it.

Each and every teen who comes through our group is a gift from God. Let us strive to influence them for right.

VI. Be constantly maturing. (I Tim. 4:15)

Youth worker, please realize that none of us have arrived, spiritually. The standard is high and we are all working toward a goal of being Christ-like. None of us have reached that goal and yet we are to be striving, growing and maturing. God does not expect perfection in our lives, but He is very interested in the direction of our lives. Please make sure that you are always progressing toward a more Christ-like lifestyle.

Be a youth worker who yearns to know God, please Him and constantly grow, daily. Read good books, listen to sermons, get into God's Word and always have something fresh and new that is helping you and that you can also share with the teens. This is what Paul meant when he said, "Take heed unto thyself."

CONCLUSION:

We have been called of God, in the youth ministry, to do two basic things: First, to live godly lives. Please remember that an exemplary life is a powerful life. Live a life of integrity. What is integrity? Integrity could be pictured as someone standing in front of any group of people, anywhere, anytime, and allowing them to ask anything they want about his or her personal or private life. Integrity is the ability to answer every question honestly without being ashamed. Can you do that? Could someone ask something about your speech, conduct, love, faith, purity that might cause you to be embarrassed? If so, find out what area you might have a problem, take it to God and deal with it.

Not only are we to live godly lifestyles, but secondly, we are to communicate godly messages. You are here because the leaders of our church felt that you have a godly lifestyle and we seek to have your influence in the lives of our teens. Please take every opportunity, whether it's in Sunday school, youth hour, at an activity or just at church, to use your tongue to communicate godly truths and encouragement to our teens. Please be sure that you, personally, are always maintaining a heart for personal soulwinning and communicating the truths of salvation to others in our valley.

Finally, realize that we are a team and are here to help each other, build each other and encourage each other. Let us strive together, bind our hearts together and work together at keeping godly lifestyles, communicating godly messages and influencing our teens to live for God for the rest of their lives.
