

Philosophy of Ministry to Youth

by Jonathan Brown

Responsibility

The Bible consistently and explicitly lays the primary responsibility for teaching youth on their parents. In the example of Deuteronomy 6, Moses teaches the adults and the adults are then expected to pass it on to their children. The stipulation being that these words are to be ‘on their hearts’ (Deuteronomy 6:6). If these words are on their hearts, adults will be able to teach their children in every situation of life, whether they are sitting, walking or lying down (Deuteronomy 6:7). (The words Moses refers to are, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:5)

Proverbs 22:6 identifies the parents’ responsibility to “train up a child in the way he should go.” Likewise, Ephesians 6:1-4 establishes parents’ authority to teach and guide children by instructing children to obey their parents. Fathers bear a special responsibility in bringing their children up in the ‘discipline and instruction of the Lord’ (Ephesians 6:4). Though a mother may possess a superior gift in training children, a father should feel the main responsibility to see that this discipline and instruction takes place.

(Deuteronomy 32:45-47, Proverbs 1:8, 3:1, 4:1, 7:24)

Implication

Since the Bible places the primary responsibility of disciplining and training youth on the parents, the ministry to youth in the church must assist and empower this role and not usurp this role from the parents. The ministry to youth must serve to build the family unity and must prove a faithful witness that God’s way in this area, as in all areas, is the best way. The ministry to youth must direct youth whenever possible to invest in their parental relationships. It must also be in league with the church leadership as a whole to equip parents to desire and love intimacy with God, to have God’s truths on their hearts and on their lips, to know and live according to God’s ways, and to pass on these life-giving truths to their children. By this we support and equip parents for the responsibilities given them.

At the same time we must recognize that as children of God, we make up the extended family of Jesus. As such we must love on, encourage, teach and discipline God’s children, especially those that come from unbelieving families.

Evangelism

Jesus made clear that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). Without being drawn to the Son by the Father, the Bible says, “There is none who seeks for God ... There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:11, 18). In fact, the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). These

truths lead us to understand that the saving of souls is a consequence of much, much prayer. For it is “by His doing” that we are in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30). Therefore, evangelism to youth must have as its covering, pre, mid and post prayer; prayer that God would call these to Himself (1 Corinthians 1:24, Romans 8:28). It should also position itself in the path of those that are being drawn so as to provide the message of the good news. It should draw its confidence from the heart of God, that none would be lost. And it should have as an intentional consequence, transformed lives resulting from discipleship.

Discipleship

In His parting words, Jesus commanded believers to make disciples and baptize. We are to teach others to observe all that He commanded with the confidence that comes from knowing that He will be with us always (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus’ model was to sow to the masses and pull out the disciples. Ministry to youth must invest deeply into the lives of those that respond affirmatively to the challenge, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Ministry

God intended the body of Christ to function much like the human body, with every member having its distinct purpose and importance, every member able to do its specialized part easily as a result of its special design. When Christ ascended, He gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8). These gifts were given for the building up of the Church (Ephesians 4:12). Many gifts, given to many members, make up the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:4-31). It is for this reason that a ministry to youth cannot be a one man operation, but must be a platform for members of the body of Christ to exercise their gifts for the building up of others. It must have at its foundation, a team of spirit filled men and women working in their gifts and the abundant joy, creativity and energy that accompany doing what God has gifted them to do. It makes necessary, prayer that beseeches the Lord of the harvest for laborers (Luke 10:2).