



## Youth Ministry - Relationships, not Personalities

By Tom Fertal

If we asked people to describe a youth minister, many would say something like, "a twenty-something year old who likes snow-boarding and mountain biking, knows all the latest music and movies, is outgoing and funny, and can play Nintendo as well as the teens can."

Well, is there something wrong with this description? I hope not. I began my career fitting this description perfectly. But is it accurate to say the ideal youth minister must be like this? ABSOLUTELY NOT! When it comes down to it, **kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!** Whether someone is 24 or 64, they can minister to youth effectively if they focus on building RELATIONSHIPS with them. Teens need to know that you care about THEM because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

A program that is personality driven - lots of initial fun because the youth minister is wild and crazy - but lacking substance - no relationships, no Gospel message - will burn out as quickly as it starts. Of course this is not to say a program shouldn't be fun! It better be! But effective youth ministry is not accomplished by trying to compete with the secular world of entertainment. We have much more to offer - we have Jesus!

Now, different kids relate better to different types of personalities. That's why it is important to realize that EVERY adult who helps with youth ministry programs is a youth minister. They must all see themselves in that role. They must all realize that the ski trip is not a goal in and of itself, but that the relationships that develop on the trip are! A wide variety of adults is critical to a successful program. You need leaders and followers, talkers

and listeners. **Most of all, you need people who view ALL youth as children of God, and who are willing to let teens know that they are loved because of that fact!**

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