



tips for the trenches

so you're
a youth
volunteer
now...

A Truth Matters
Ministries Resource
by Brody Jespersen

{4} *Knowing Christ, or Doing Youth Ministry?*

A mentor of mine used to always say, “you can con a con, but you can’t kid a kid”. His words are true. Students in our ministry are watching us carefully and meticulously. They are truth detectors, and the truth which they are desperate to uncover is this: Is what you are saying to me really what you believe? Is it really how you live when you aren’t here with us? Does it really change you? Does it really matter to you?

There have been several occasions during quiet time with the Lord I have had to come face to face with these questions. Do I *know* Christ, or do I just know about Christ, and *know* teenagers? Which then leads to the next question, does knowing teenagers even matter if I don’t know Christ?

Obviously the answer is no. This is the point Christ made all throughout the gospels. Many knew about him, but the number who *knew* him was small. I fear that many youth workers spend too little time really striving to *know* Christ.

These words of Christ really heed warning to us:

“On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’” – Jesus (Matthew 7:22)

We can train, equip, and practice to our hearts content, but if we don’t *know* Christ, it’s all meaningless.

“And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?” – Jesus (Mark 8:36)

The same mentor would always remind me that I could only take students as far spiritually as I was able and willing to take myself. Translation: the best way for me to love teenagers, is for me to *really* love and know Christ.

Look at how Jeremiah wrestled with this in chapter 9:23-26:

This is what the Lord says:

“Don’t let the wise boast in their wisdom,
or the powerful boast in their power,
or the rich boast in their riches.

But those who wish to boast
should boast in this alone:

that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord
who demonstrates unfailing love
and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth,
and that I delight in these things.

I, the Lord, have spoken!

“A time is coming,” says the Lord, “when I will punish all those who are circumcised in body but not in spirit.



tips for the trenches

so you're
a youth
volunteer
now...

A Truth Matters
Ministries Resource
by Brody Jespersen

{4} *Knowing Christ, or Doing Youth Ministry?*

Did you catch the main takeaway? Amidst the warning of judgment for those who have outwardly put on a show of faith, but inwardly have not been changed (v.25), we see the heart of God's desire: *"But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord."*

My question for you is this: What are you doing to Know Christ? You can take in all the conferences, read all the books, have the most meetings, but if you miss this, you miss it all.

1. Take an Inventory.

Where do you most see, hear, and experience Christ? Is it in His word, in prayer, or in music or nature or community? Where is it that you best grow in your *knowing* of Him?

2. Make a Plan.

Once you know the answer to the first question, the next thing for you to do is to open your calendar, put it in, mark it out, add it to your current load and move other stuff out of the way to make room for it. Commit to practicing these times with the Lord, to allow yourself to see Him, hear from Him, and be transformed by Him.

3. Tell Somebody.

Now that you have made a decision to pursue a deeper relationship with Christ, to really care about your soul first and foremost, tell somebody. Talk to your senior pastor; tell your wife, your youth pastor, or your mentor. Find somebody who is willing and able to hold you accountable. Somebody who will ask you how you are doing, what you are learning, hearing and where you are growing.

Student ministry will take so much out of you week-to-week, month-to-month, and year-to-year. Eventually you will be done with youth ministry (your group will move on, or you will leave) and you will find yourself face to face with the possible reality that your spiritual identity was tied up in doing rather than knowing. May this reminder encourage you to care first and foremost for your soul.