

IMPARTING VALUE

Go after the hot girls. That's how you build your numbers. If you get hot girls to come to youth group, then guys and everyone else will want to come, and your group will explode.

Okay, that may not be an exact quote, but you get the picture. It's been close to 10 years since I heard the latter statement, and my memory isn't what it used to be—but I definitely do remember the “hot girls” part. Somehow I'll never be able to block out the moment my senior pastor told me to go after “hot girls” to build the youth group. Really? I wondered. Does he really want me looking at teens as hot or not hot? Isn't that about two seconds away from becoming a national headline?

It doesn't matter to whom I recount that quote; everybody responds with the same shock and offended response: “How dare he put higher value on one group of kids based on their looks!” One youth pastor put it this way: “That falls into the category of—even if you're only thinking it—you DON'T EVER say it!” But that might be the biggest problem of all.

Take Stock

Who are the up-front kids in your group? The ones you're grooming? The leaders? Who gets to stand behind the microphone? Play the instruments? Be in the dramas? Who gets called on to share testimonies and report to the rest of the church? Who do you brag about? Is it just the good-looking kids? The popular kids? The chairman of the board's kid? (Okay, we all do that last one. That's called job security. But I hope you're getting my point.)

When we view our bodies as temples of God, we send a lot of messages about the value of other temples through our actions, choices, and who we give attention to. Romans 12 refers to our bodies as holy and pleasing to God—but are you communicating that verbally and non-verbally? Are your actions sending the message that all body types, images, and people have equal value and equal significance? Or are only certain temples being elevated over others?

When I was a teenager, we used to whisper about this one teacher. He frequently seemed to place his arm around different high school girls' shoulders—but not all of them. Without ever saying a word, he communicated very obviously to all of us that prettier girls had more value. And that's a devastating conclusion to come to if you're not part of the valued group. Granted, that's an extreme example—there were definitely some deeper issues going on there; but at the same time, creepiness aside, we got the unhealthy value message. Young people pick up



on it quickly, and while they may never say a word to you or the other adults, you can be sure they're talking about it with each other.

Reshape Opinions

In a culture where kids are bombarded from all sides, day and night, from every possible source that they're not good enough, strong enough, pretty enough, athletic enough, smart enough—that they lack value in so many parts of their beings, youth workers must become beacons of hope. We have the opportunity to reshape their opinions of what is truly valuable and beautiful, to communicate to them the immeasurable value that we have as holy temples of God.

And in that responsibility we must be intentional both in our verbal communication—but especially in our nonverbal communication. 🗨️



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