

20/6/1
EKSTW002

Deacon/Elder Lecture Outlines

Lecture 17

How to Deal Effectively With Teenagers

I. Introduction

- A. Ask yourself this question: "What subgroup of God's Church is most exciting to deal with?"
- B. Would you answer, "The singles"? Some would, because single adults are a special challenge. Perhaps others would say that the YES-aged youths are the most fun since their young minds are so refreshing to deal with.
- C. But it is likely most of us would almost immediately answer, in unison, "The teenagers!" For while the teenagers in our congregations almost always seem to be the biggest test of the leadership skills of the average elder or pastor, they also can provide some of the greatest rewards.

II. SPS

Since we in leadership positions in God's Church must deal with all congregations, this lecture will explain how to deal effectively with teenagers.

III. Need

I need to know more about S, it is helpful and reasons why this subject in this series.

While most of us sense the general how to deal effectively with teenagers is important to briefly state the reasons should comprise a whole lecture in

A. Teens Are a Large Group

an important subgroup within the challenges of such a sizeable part of the church and see that the special needs of the church.

Teens form a large and important group in the Church. To ignore the special needs of this group would be, simply, to neglect the congregation. Read Acts 6:1-6. The apostles were sensitive to the special needs of this subgroup of widows in the Church.

B. Critical Time of Teens' Life

The teen years are a time of exciting changes in a person's life. It is therefore critical that all elders and leaders in the Church are equipped to deal with teens during this short but dynamic portion of their lives. Read I Corinthians 13:11. The transition from being a child to being an adult, along with the major changes that it implies, occurs during the teenage years.

C. Special Skills Required to Deal With Teens

Experience has proven that the skills necessary to deal with teenagers don't devolve to us automatically. Further, the skills necessary are different than those needed for dealing with the elderly or the YES-level kids.

D. Unique Era of History

This era of world history is different from all others and presents unique challenges to today's teens. II Timothy 3:1-7 lists the special problems of this age. Some teens, sad to say, give in to the pressures around them. We as leaders in the Church must see the special circumstances modern society presents to teens, and we must be equipped to deal with these special challenges.

E. Some of Us Have No Teens

Probably those who now have teens feel somewhat equipped to deal with others' teens. But those who do not now have teens, or have never had children, especially need to give extra effort to learning how to deal with this special age group.

F. We Can Influence Teens for Their Benefit

We can influence teenagers and cause growth in their lives, and we should. But we must know how to do it.

IV. The Rewards of Dealing With Teens

To some, dealing with teens is a drudgery to be dreaded and avoided. To others, teenagers are an exciting and rewarding group with which to work. Since our attitude toward teens will spill over into our actions, it is important that we develop a positive attitude toward what can and should be a rewarding experience. Here are some of the many rewards of dealing with teens:

A. Teens Do Fun Things

A certain amount of play is good for everyone, not just teens. Those who deal with the teens get to enjoy some downright fun activities like camping, skiing, etc.

B. Growth in Teens Is Rewarding to See

All of us enjoy seeing another person grow. Growth in teens is no exception. It is extremely rewarding to watch a young person develop character or personality and to have had a part in it. I Thessalonians 2:7 shows the love and care Paul showed toward his congregations.

C. Teens Exhibit Qualities We Should Emulate

As we grow older, some of us become overly serious or sober and jaded. The enthusiasm and sparkle teens often exhibit is infectious and can help rekindle zest and enjoyment for life.

V. A Positive Attitude -- The First Requirement

A. Often people are negative about, fearful of or intimidated by teenagers. Most likely this is because they do not have teens of their own, and have formed impressions about teens from observing bad examples. To be sure, bad examples do exist.

B. Yet, a person who must deal with teens needs to approach his responsibility with a positive attitude.

1. To develop that attitude, dwell upon the list of "rewards" for working with teens, mentioned above.

2. Further, get to know personally some of the teens. If you do, you will find that they can be quite engaging.

3. Finally, ask God in prayer for a positive attitude toward these young people who are potential heirs with us of God's Family.

VI. Principles for Working With Teens

Like any other leadership skill, the ability to work effectively with teens can be learned, if we will take the time and effort. Some seem to have a special talent in this area, and this can intimidate the rest of us into believing that it is no use for us even to try. However, many have learned how to be effective with teens,

and you can, too. Here are some of the main principles that will ensure success:

A. Treat Teens Like Ordinary People

Because teenagers are unique in certain aspects, we can at times fail to see them as real people, and respond only with some special set of behavioral rules. While we should not ignore their unique needs, nonetheless we must remember that teenagers are just humans who respond to the same gestures all humans respond to: friendliness, caring, concern, listening, etc.

Read I Corinthians 13 and see how many of these qualities you can incorporate into your relationships with the teens. Above all, make sure that you don't ignore teens or pass them by as if they were mere toddlers without their own identities.

Remember to always show them the common courtesy you would extend to anyone, such as a handshake, a friendly greeting, using their name or praising their efforts. Such acknowledgements will go a long way to establishing a bond between you.

B. Be Conscious of Their Unique Needs

In contrast to what has just been said (that teens are just ordinary people who respond to ordinary courtesy and human-relations techniques) is the fact that teens do have special needs. Their age positions them between childhood and adulthood. Here are some ways teens differ from both children and adults. Remember these differences so that you may treat teens with understanding.

1. Teens are more educated than young children, but generally less than adults.
2. Teens are still comparatively naive about life's harsh realities.
3. They generally lack experience.
4. They retain the curiosity of childhood, but sometimes lack the openness to ask questions.
5. Teens sometimes seem to ping-pong between very adult attitudes and very childish ones.

C. Develop an Attitude of Respect Within the Teens

Teenagers sometimes lack a general attitude of respect for adults, or for authority in general. II Timothy 3:2 says people in this age will be "disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." The attitudes displayed in our public-school systems strongly bear this out.

In God's Church, we must cultivate respect in a kind and diplomatic way -- toward parents, all adults and authority in general. The Fifth Commandment is really a directive that we must honor and respect all authority, since the father and mother are the foundation of community authority.

On the other hand, high-handed, overbearing, aloof or dictatorial adults or elders also miss the mark and fail to help God's government properly function. Remember these guidelines:

1. Get respect by winning it. You win respect by being worthy of it -- that is, being a person of true character (including warmth, love, compassion and personal strength), and being truly skilled at what you are professing to teach. (For example, if the basketball coach doesn't know the game or is a poor coach, true respect will be hard to master).

Read in I Timothy 3 the qualities of an elder or deacon. If you display these, you will win the respect of all the members, not just the teens.

2. Being overbearing, harsh, brisk, uninterested or unyielding will destroy respect, not build it. Some wrongly confuse these qualities with respect or dignity. They are merely satanic counterfeits. Jesus Christ warned against these attitudes in the strongest terms, and instead prescribed an attitude of service (Matthew 20:25-26).
3. Respect is a two-way street. God respects us, His children, and shows us in thousands of ways. We sense this and in turn respect Him. We must follow God's example and avoid words or deeds that tend to humiliate, degrade, embarrass, frighten or anger teens. This is the very thing God warns against when He says, in Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath."
4. Gain respect by expecting it. If you don't allow disrespectfulness, it will tend to fade away. See Numbers 12 where God would not tolerate disrespect

for His servant Moses. This does not mean that we call fire down from heaven at every slip of the tongue or that we make the kids treat us like gods, but we should make sure that they do not show disrespect for us.

D. Require Teens to Meet the Standards of the Church

When dealing with teens, it is at times tempting to sit back and let them find their own level of moral conduct. This is not wise. Leaders of teens in God's Church are not merely observers, but teachers with the responsibility to uphold the standards God requires.

Teaching teens and helping them requires ingenuity and work. But it must be done. We are striving to show the teens a better way, not merely giving them opportunities to be themselves. This not to say we demand perfection now. If we did, none of us would qualify.

We must therefore be understanding, encouraging and helpful, but persistent and consistent in enforcing the true moral standards God requires.

E. Exalt God's True Values and Way of Life in Their Minds

Keeping standards up means that we demand a certain level of behavior. But we are trying to do more than merely become disciplinarians. We wish to help the youths inculcate God's way into their lives.

One way to do this is to use every opportunity to extol the true values. We can do this in Bible studies, of course, but it is equally important to talk of God's way as we go through life with the teens, so they begin to view God's principles as wonderful guideposts to be admired, respected and emulated. Carefully read Deuteronomy 6:6-7, where God directs that we constantly teach children the true laws and values.

For example, it may be proper to present a trophy to the winning team at a basketball tournament. Yet it is also proper to present a trophy to the team that displays the greatest sportsmanship. Doing so tends to exalt the true values as they should be exalted.

F. Project Genuine Concern and Helpfulness

Kids these days do indeed want to learn about life, but they tend to feel adults don't really care. Those who are the most effective with teens are those who

project an image of concern and helpfulness. Of course, the only genuine way to project such an image is to actually be interested in helping the kids.

In the final analysis, such qualities must stem from godly love in us. If we lack such love, we must go to God and ask that He supply it. This point cannot be overemphasized, for kids will overlook our minor slips in dealing with them if they sense a genuine concern within us.

G. Strive to Demonstrate the Practical Aspects of God's Truth as a Way of Life

Teenagers are at an impressionable age, and can be taught a better way of life if they are made to see it works to give them the things they want. Note well the introduction to Proverbs in Proverbs 1:1-7. The introduction, as well as the entire book, concentrates upon the practical application of God's law in our lives.

Sometimes leaders in God's Church strive to teach teens the academic side of God's truth (such as the names of all the Bible books), yet fail to show the kids that God's truth is a way of living that will bring them what they want out of life. Doctrine is not an end in itself, but rather an outline of a way of living.

Leaders in God's Church must therefore strive to explain the practical aspects of the truth. Be careful not to picture the truth merely as a system of rules that will make one "righteous" (which is a false assumption anyway!), but rather as a pathway to happiness.

For example, to explain that premarital sex breaks the Seventh Commandment is necessary, but to include the reasons why such activities cause heartache is better, for it applies the truth to life. Those leaders who include subtle lessons about God's truth and its superior way in everything they do with the teens will get positive results.

H. Develop Positive Peer Pressure Within the Local YOU

Intense negative pressure faces teens at school and with their friends. But the phenomenon of peer pressure can work with us as well as against us, if we know how to muster its strength to our side.

To develop positive peer pressure within the local YOU, try the following:

1. Make YOU so enjoyable that people want to belong. To belong, they know they have to conform to our standards.
2. Extol the accomplishments of individual members within the group so that other members admire their good works. When others admire us, we are drawn to them and to more good deeds.
3. Encourage the teens to look at YOU as a team that is different from the world. Feelings of being a team build group camaraderie, which in turn builds conformity.

I. Deal With the Teens Through Their Parents

The job of God's Church is not to replace the parents, but to point children and parents toward each other. Therefore it is important that we as leaders in the Church do not circumvent the parents, but rather support them. To do so, apply the following principles:

1. Never criticize parents to the teens. If it is necessary to say something negative about adults to the teens (such as, "These days parents are too permissive"), be sure to include comments that encourage them to respect their own parents in spite of weaknesses. Never openly criticize a specific parent to his teen.
2. If correcting a parent is ever necessary, do so in private so the teens will not overhear.
3. ~~Don't~~ encourage a teen to go against his parent even if you feel the parent is wrong. Go to the parent to correct the situation.
4. Include parents on major decisions that affect YOU.
5. Refer teens to their parents when they have problems that should be solved by parents.
6. Don't allow kids to criticize their folks. Of course, attitude is important here. It does not mean that they cannot communicate to you their problems with their parents, only that they must obey the Fifth Commandment at all times.

7. Actively teach respect for parents.

8. Show respect to parents yourself -- both yours and theirs.

J. Remember That God Will Be Calling Them

True, teenagers are not converted and therefore cannot be dealt with like converted persons. And true, we as humans cannot call them into the Church. But God reveals that the children of baptized parents are "holy" -- that is, separated out by God with the opportunity to be called (I Corinthians 7:14). This being so, we must deal with the kids differently than we would if they were the sons or daughters of people of this world.

Primarily, this means that you deal with them in a way that will lead naturally to conversion, and in a way that will cause them to remember lessons when they are converted down the line. This approach allows for God to call them as He wishes, without trying to do the job ourselves.

In practical terms this means that we must remember they are potential Church members and deal with them as such.

For example, it means we should not hesitate to go past mere moral lessons and explain even doctrinal points when appropriate. This, of course, we would not do were we merely in charge of a youth group (even one with high moral standards) of this world.

K. Learn to Relate to Teens

All of us admire people who have a strong rapport with teens. We sometimes wish we had the same rapport, but tend to feel that rapport is a gift of birth and otherwise impossible to attain. This is not true. Anyone can improve his ability to relate if he will follow a few simple steps. Paul remarked that he had made an effort to relate to different ethnic or religious types by being all things to all men (I Corinthians 9:19-22).

Here are some pointers on how to relate to teens:

1. Take an interest in each individual teen and express that interest. Teens will respond when we reach out to them. If they find you really wish to help them -- by having them over for a

barbecue, for example -- they will draw closer to you.

2. Talk to them. A teen notices when an adult stops and talks to him or her. Rapport is built through communication, and talking is great communication.
3. Listen to them. Everything said in point 2 applies here as well, and even more so.
4. Make an effort to learn about the trends and interests of the teen world. Granted, none of us wishes to become an authority on heavy-metal rock groups so a few misguided teens will think we're "cool." On the other hand, it might be good to know if wearing white socks comes back in vogue, just in case we're tempted to express shock when someone shows up at a teen activity wearing them and is otherwise well-dressed.

Paul made it clear it was fine to at times mesh with the customs of a particular group in order to relate, so long as doing so was not out of accord with God's laws (Romans 13:7).

VII. Special Problem Areas

Each major age group in the Church has its own unique problems. Teenagers are no exception. It pays to briefly review them.

A. Rebellion Against Parents

While many teens are well-behaved and obedient, the teenage years for some become a time of rebellion and consequent disobedience (II Timothy 3:2).

B. Romantic Involvements

In recent years, dating and romantic involvements have been taking place at earlier and earlier ages. Leaders of the teens should be aware of this trend in society.

C. Premarital Sex

A strong tendency toward sexual experimentation and outright fornication exists in the teen community at large. This stems, no doubt, from the heavy emphasis on romance as stated in letter B. All Church leaders would do well to not be naive about possible or potential sexual experimentation within the teen groups they serve.

D. Drugs

Although illegal drugs have existed for millennia, only in recent decades has drug abuse become so widespread. Many teens are under heavy peer pressure to experiment with drugs. Therefore, teen leaders in the Church must keep a wary and watchful eye, lest temptation should turn to tragedy for a teenager.

E. Academic and Success Pressures

Our materialistic age, with its physical achievements, causes much stress in certain teens, and must not go unrecognized by those leaders who deal with teens and wish to help them face life's problems God's ways.

VIII. Methods of Instruction

From all that has been said in this lecture, it should be clear that the purpose of teen activities in the Church is not merely to provide a good time. Their ultimate objective is to teach godly character and a better way of living. This better way of living can be taught both directly and indirectly in the following ways:

A. Our Approach

We need to remember that the way we talk, our mannerisms should be consistent with the loving and compassionate way we wish to be treated when we are taught and corrected. We don't want to appear as though we are always expecting the worst from them. We don't want to always appear to be accusing them of wrongdoing. We want to avoid the "Gestapo approach."

B. Fun Activities

These activities are not an end in themselves but should teach God's way. On the other hand, they should be fun.

C. Example

The examples of every adult associated with the Church teen groups are of paramount importance, since we teach so strongly by example.

D. Teen Bible Studies

Monthly teen Bible studies held in each church are a prime arena for teaching God's truth.

E. Church Services

Likewise, even though Church services are geared primarily to the baptized adults, it is good to remember the needs of the teens during the messages and tailor appropriate parts to them when advisable.

IX. Conclusion

Dealing effectively with teens is a challenging endeavor. It is also one that is filled with a great sense of accomplishment and with a great big helping of just plain fun. Do yourself a favor and grow in your skill at serving this important group.