

 FOR STARTERS

In what ways do you get ministered to (as opposed to ministering to others)?

What's happening in your relationship with God right now?

How did you experience God's love for you today? or express God's love to others?

IN THE TRENCHES

Lindsey was an excellent volunteer. She was consistent; she loved students; and she was really good at her role in our ministry. However, there was something missing in Lindsey. Even though she desired to succeed in ministry, she had trouble setting the "tasks" aside and letting God work in and through her. She got easily caught up in the "ministry checklist" and in focusing on what she could do. I really believe Lindsey had pure motives and wanted to serve God. But somehow ministry didn't hold the same joy and fulfillment for her as it would have if she had let go of some of the tasks and put energy toward her own soul. Ask yourself, "How are you like or unlike Lindsey?"

TRAINING on the GO

I've been in youth ministry long enough to see that the spiritual health of youth leaders deteriorates when ministry becomes too busy. The change can happen so gradually and innocently that youth leaders don't even notice it happening. But eventually their attitudes and actions begin to show signs of burnout, discontentment, pride, and hardheartedness.

The most apparent cause of spiritual deterioration is becoming so busy *doing* the work of God that they miss the importance of *being* God's person. They subtly confuse the two—doing and being. As a youth worker, *being* connected to God on a daily basis is more important than anything you can *do*. Leading a small group, attending a student's activity, hanging out with a hurting kid, ministering to a family—these are all good things. But not at the expense of being God's person.

Jesus said, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you... apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). This image of being connected to God is the image you should be clinging to as a youth leader. A connection with God results in a healthy *being*. When this connection is valued, you'll avoid spiritual apathy and ministry burnout—two deadly "killers" of leaders.

I realize true spirituality can be seen through visible activities such as going to church, sharing openly in a small group, and having meaningful times with God. But Christian behavior doesn't always mean a person is spiritually healthy. God isn't looking for people who act righteously outwardly but aren't healthy on the inside. God is much more concerned about your *being* than your *doing*.

I've accidentally fallen into the trap of thinking God wants my sacrifice of time and my offering of hard work more than he wants my praise and my pursuit of intimacy with him. I guess you may have done this, too.

Have you ever heard or said something like:

- I can stop reading the Bible now. I have enough material for tonight's Bible study.
- I don't need to take time for prayer. We'll pray at tonight's program.
- I had a rough week at work. I'll skip church this weekend.

Your relationship with God is more than the habits of reading your Bible and praying. Depth is revealed in the process of becoming *intimate* with God. Intimacy with God sounds incredibly spiritual, but the road to intimacy runs against the grain of almost everything I *do* in youth ministry. It's more than having a quiet *time*; it's developing a quiet *life*. Intimacy doesn't happen in a day or a week; it happens during a long-term adventure with Jesus.

My prayer is that you'll pause often to check the spiritual temperature of your heart. Be sensitive to the subtle warning signs of spiritual disconnection, and be prepared to take ruthless measures to connect with God.

CONNECT to God's Word

"Be still, and know that I am God." —Psalm 46:10

- How are you currently *doing* instead of *being*?
- In what ways can you commit to follow Psalm 46:10—and *be* God's person?

Write a response and prayer to God here...

TO THE POINT

- Consider what it means to *be* God's person rather than just *do* God's work.
- Evaluate your inner life versus your activities.
- Make it a goal to become something deeper than merely an activity director.

TRY IT

Have you ever thought about giving 10 percent of your workweek back to God? It's a biblical principle to give God a tithe (10 percent) of our finances, but what about a tithe of our time?

Consider what that might look like for you. How many hours are you awake each day? What would 10 percent of that time look like if you gave it back to God? Commit to trying it once this week. If you give 10 percent to God, do you believe that he can handle the other 90 percent?

Allow the time to be a physical reminder of your dependence on God.

Here are some ideas, but be creative with how you spend this 10 percent of your time:

- Sit in silence.
- Listen.
- Read.
- Listen to worship music.
- Sing.
- Pray on your knees.

MAKE IT PERSONAL