



A LITTLE

NUDGE

When you arrive onsite, one of your first goals should always be to learn everything you can about your new environment. Your new environment may include but is not limited to:

- Your new community (city, town, people, place).
- The ministry you are responsible for.
- The local church.
- The life your family will be stepping into.

What are the issues your students deal with on a day-to-day basis? What programs, leaders, budget, and so on, are they used to? What are the expectations for you, both personally and professionally? In all these questions, what are the *timeless truths* beneath all the issues and programs?

These timeless truths are the ones you have either experienced in a quality youth ministry setting or have been taught by a wise mentor or professor. They are the truths that have given you a framework for how to do youth ministry. As true as they are, however, they always require fresh methods. Your context will require you to come up with new ways to be effective in your ministry. Just because you are called to youth ministry does not mean you will be an effective youth pastor. My hope is that this book helps you be as effective as you can in those first days as you embrace and balance timeless truths with fresh methods.

With that in mind, allow me to give you two nudges as you enter this time of change. These nudges are important to me as a youth pastor and, in my humble opinion, are vital for the success of any youth pastor. They are timeless and vital to healthy youth ministry.

Be Self-Aware

With the calling to youth ministry come the responsibility and opportunity to understand who you are. Why has God brought you to this place? What role do you play in the ministry equation? Who are you in God's strategy? What's amazing is that God loves to reveal these things, and even if you think he isn't, he probably is.

The big lesson I've had to learn the hard way is this: *It is never, ever, about me.* It's always about God. If I had a dollar for every time I messed up because I made it about me, I'd be rich. Listen, it is all about what Jesus says:

“Come to ME, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

—Matthew 11:28, emphasis added

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.’”

—Matthew 16:24

The apostle Paul says in Romans 12:3, *“For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you: Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”* This is the theme verse for our book. Paul puts us in our place here, and I love it. God will decide when, where, and how we are to follow him in this calling of ministry. What a great challenge for us.

These three verses become a healthy place for us to put our perspective. My goal here is not to tear you down. On the contrary, let us together celebrate that God has asked us to partner with him in accomplishing his goals for the world. What a privilege! This ministry can never be about us, or we will have failed at being faithful to the calling God has given us in ministry.

Enjoy the Journey

I love what the word *epic* means (extending beyond the usual or ordinary, especially in size or scope). I think the journey with Jesus is an epic one. I know it's cheesy, but you know how you can auto-sign every email? Yeah, I'm the guy who signs his, "The greatest epic is the journey with Jesus . . ."

I just love epic moments. I really enjoy movies where epic battles happen, like *Braveheart*; and epic journeys/conflicts, like *Gladiator*; and epic courtroom scenes, like *A Few Good Men*. I enjoy epic moments in music, like when U2 puts out an album that you know we are going to be listening to 20 years from now. I also like epic books—the ones you pick up and can't put down.

I love epic moments where lives are changed. I have no doubt in my mind that youth ministry is an epic journey filled with epic moments. We have the gift of seeing God do amazing things in teenagers' lives. We have the privilege of seeing them grow from crazy, immature middle school youth to crazy, immature high school youth! All along the way we have the gift of asking God, "Okay, Lord, what's next?"

My challenge to you is to **enjoy it**.

Enjoy the fact that God chose you to be in this place for this time. Walk with confidence, knowing that he is able to do great things through even us! Find joy in the most challenging of situations and lead with a reckless abandon to find God in all the twists and turns in your ministry life. May that be your epic start during this transition from one ministry to the next.