



What Does a Mature Youth Pastor Look Like?

by Steve Maltempo, Student Ministry Strategist

For some, the thought of a youth pastor being mature is an oxymoron—the two words just don’t go together. Many think of a young, energetic “wannabe” minister. Youth pastors are known for their fun-loving nature and ability to connect with students. More often, however, student pastors are also leaders and are educated, articulate, organized, passionate, focused, called, equipped, and even published.

So what does a mature youth pastor look like? Most youth pastors’ job descriptions are a long list of expectations. Some churches focus on a list of characteristics: biblically literate; doctrinally and theologically sound; a skilled, humorous communicator; organized and able to multi-task; skilled relationally; do we even need to say, “computer literate”?; and the list goes on. Some focus on education: he must have attended Bible college, seminary, or have years of experience or he must be a reader and a life-long learner. Others focus on a set of strong morals so he can be a good role model: one who doesn’t drink, smoke, dip, chew, cuss, or drive fast; always wears a seat belt and dresses appropriately, etc. Sometimes the focus is on the spiritual disciplines of studying the Bible and praying without ceasing. There are even more expectations placed on youth pastors, like visiting every school represented in the youth ministry; going to extra-curricular activities in the evenings and on weekends; being involved in the community; visiting the homes of the students; etc., all while maintaining office hours and having a strong family life. How can one man do it all?

My pastor, Mark Jordan, at Ironbridge Baptist Church in Chester, jokingly says his job is to “keep everybody happy!” Unfortunately, there is a lot of truth to that statement for all pastors. Youth pastors spend so much time meeting the expectations of pastors, parents, students, and the church body, they are rarely able to do what I call “biblical youth ministry.” Shhh! Don’t tell anyone, but if youth pastors were allowed to do youth ministry biblically, they would all be fired. What? Yes, youth pastors not only have to keep attendance up but grow the youth group numerically. After all, we Baptists are a counting people. Heaven forbid a youth pastor put more expectations on or demand more time from students than a coach, band director, or travel team coach!

What does a mature youth pastor look like? A mature youth pastor realizes he is a man of God and that his focus is to become more like Jesus, not to follow a list of man-made expectations. In essence, a mature youth pastor will live full-time for Christ and do youth ministry on the side!