

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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Youth Ministers

(from The Beacon—by Frank Himmel)

The May issue of The Christian Chronicle carried an interview with LeGard Smith, now "Scholar in Residence for Christian Studies" at David Lipscomb University in Nashville. One item caught my attention. Smith was asked what he would say if he had the undivided attention of every member of churches of Christ for 10 minutes. Included in his answer:

". . . I would call on the church to abandon youth ministries, which have toppled the spiritual hierarchy. Throughout Scripture, spiritual leadership is not only male, but it's elder. It's the wisdom of the years that leads and nurtures younger generations."

Abandon youth ministries. This is not the cry of some old fogey ultra-conservative that resists change at every turn. It is the counsel of one who is seeing among his peers the ripe fruit of an ill-advised tree.

Youth ministries typically feature two things: abundant recreational activities and shallow, entertaining instruction. What happens when teens who are accustomed to such things become adults? Will they immediately consider themselves too old for church-sponsored recreation, or suddenly insist on more sober worship and meatier preaching? Of course not! As a result, today's "adult church" has in many cases become just a slightly toned-down version of yesterday's "youth church."

The Bible, of course, knows nothing of youth ministries, youth church, or church-sponsored recreation for any age. And it emphatically warns against ear-tickling preaching (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

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This warning is timely. In recent years, increasing numbers of congregations which have stood opposed to institutionalism and church-sponsored recreation (things readily accepted by Smith's associates) are beginning to dabble in youth ministries. We don't call them that, of course, and in most cases we have not yet crossed the line into unauthorized activities. But the trend is cause for concern.

Special meetings for young people call for certain speakers, those whose presentations are more entertaining. The truth is slightly repackaged - less Bible reading and exposition, more stories and humor, and lessons that are mostly application with content limited to "relevant" (daily living) themes. Parents provide ample food and entertainment.

Do not misunderstand. No one opposes occasional sermons targeted at a particular segment of the audience, nor do we underestimate the value of young Christians getting together. However, when meetings for young people consistently take on a more entertaining air, when the add-on recreation becomes expected, when we advertise it along with the worship (even though it is not paid for from the church's treasury), and when brethren begin to say that we may lose our young people without such events, we have gone farther than we think down the wrong path.

"A Sure Way To Run"

By Steven Deaton

"If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked" (Prov. 29:12).

We can see this truth played out in modern and ancient times. Great kings of the past have devastated their kingdoms by listening to lies. The more they listened, the more corrupt their governments became. Eventually, there comes a point of no return and either the kingdom collapses or the king is assassinated.

In more modern times, we can see in our nation administrations at both the state and national level that were devastated by lies. The thing is such things not only harm the people involved, but also citizens in general. In fact, some of the

actions taken by rulers who listen to lies have impacted the country for decades.

These matters, though, are not the focus of this article. Rather, we want to bring Proverbs 29:12 down to a personal, practical application.

When we listen to lies, those around us will be wicked. Why? Because those are the kind of people we will attract and will be attracted to.

This can happen in many areas, some more devastating than others. We can listen to lies in the physical, financial, moral, and spiritual matters. If we listen to the idea that eating all you want of anything you want is a good way to live, it will catch up to us. Our health will be adversely affected and those around us will be unhealthy too. If we pay attention to get rich quick schemes, we will lose our money. And, guess what? The people around us will be broke too.

The other two areas are much more important than health and wealth. If we listen to lies on moral issues, we will be surrounded by immoral people. When we give heed to situation ethics, "free love," and materialism we will be accompanied by liars, fornicators, and thieves. It will all feed on itself and lead to our ruin.

If we heed false doctrine, we will walk the broad path. Our worship will be vain and our souls damned (Matt. 15:7-14). The people around us will believe the same things and thereby harden us in our false beliefs giving us a false confidence.

While it might be hard at times to discern the truth from lies on health and wealth, it is not hard to determine right from wrong on moral and doctrinal issues. All we need to do is turn to God's word. It is right and gives us the way to go (2 Pet. 1:3).

Not only must we learn and apply Proverbs 29:12, but we must also burn it into the brains of our children. They need to know the consequences of listening to lies. It might make them feel good for a while. It might make them popular. It might let them do what they want to do. However, it will catch up to them and lead to personal devastation.

Let's love and listen to the truth and in so doing surround ourselves with good people (Prov. 23:23).

“Buy the truth, and do not sell it,
Also wisdom and instruction and
understanding.”

Proverbs 23:23