

ProTeens

Director's Manual

ProTeens Director's Manual

Revised Edition

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-59557-099-4

Design by Shannon Brown

Published by



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Introduction

What Is Positive Action For Christ?

Mission

Positive Action For Christ is a non-profit corporation established to equip Bible teachers and youth leaders to magnify the majesty of God. It is our mission to help train a generation of youth who have a passion to know God and to display His glory to the world. However, this kind of youth does not develop naturally. We endeavor to provide training and resources that will help you as a teacher or youth leader promote a God-Focus in your youth.

History

Positive Action For Christ grew out of the vibrant youth ministry of Frank Hamrick. In 1969, he began the first ProTeen club at Falls Road Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, NC. Other ministries heard of the materials, and soon the studies were being used by dozens of different ministries. To keep up with the growing demand, Positive Action For Christ incorporated in 1972. The ministry continued to grow, eventually adding a Bible curriculum for Christian schools and home schools. Currently we provide God-Focused Bible studies and curricula to churches and schools around the world.

Ministry

Today, Positive Action ministers in two primary ways: 1) by supplying quality Bible study materials and curricula to churches and Christian schools and 2) by providing training opportunities for youth leaders and teachers.

This manual presents the philosophy of youth ministry featured in our training ministry and also introduces the resources we produce to encourage a God-Focus in the next generation. The final chapters outline options for implementing youth programs that are God-Focused and adaptable to your particular church.

What Is ProTeens?

ProTeens is the name of the youth ministry division of Positive Action For Christ. We offer a large variety of Bible study resources to help deepen your teens' understanding of the Word and to draw them closer to the God of the Word. ProTeens is also the name of our teen Bible club program that challenges teens to grow in Christian maturity and to develop a deep, all-encompassing love for God. The resources and programs are discussed further in chapters 5 through 7.

Our Purpose

Developing Mature,
God-Focused Youth
Ephesians 4:11-13

Saved

Separated

Stable in the
Word

Our Aim

Sharing

Submitting

Our Plan

Knowing God's Glory
Colossians 1:9-11

Growing in God's Glory
2 Corinthians 3:18

Showing God's Glory
Psalm 145:10-12

Our Resources

Bible Studies Focused
on the Name, Attributes,
Works, and Son of God

Bible Studies Teaching
the Doctrine and Practice
of the Christian Life

Bible Studies Aimed at
Encouraging Service for
God, to Others, Through
the Grace of the Gospel

Pointed Group Studies
Designed to Bridge
Knowing God and
Submitting to Him

Activities and Programs
That Provide Opportunities
to Enjoy Fellowship and
Share Your Faith

Philosophy: Reaching Youth with a God-Focus

Frank Hamrick, the founder of Positive Action For Christ, has often said that the second most important thing about a person's ministry is his philosophy. The most important thing is knowing what his philosophy is. Certainly it would be foolish to begin to build a house without a blueprint or to run a business without a budget. However, many youth leaders approach the ministry in just that way. If you are a normal person, you may have been tempted to skip right over these introductory chapters about philosophy, purpose, and aim to get to the "good stuff" at the end. Let me challenge you to resist that temptation and spend a few minutes examining the following chapters. Let God guide your philosophy of ministry, and then you will see the fruit He desires. Even more importantly, you and your young people will see Him!

What Is a Philosophy?

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines philosophy as "the most basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group." Simply put, your philosophy is why you do what you do. It is everything that makes up who you are and ultimately guides what you do and how you live. That means you already have a philosophy. Even if you have never thought about your philosophy before, it is still there driving what you do in ministry. A force this powerful ought not be ignored but instead be examined and brought into conformity to God's Word.

The Three Dictators

Maybe you are asking, "Is knowing my philosophy really as important as all that? I mean, what's the harm in not thinking through my philosophy?" The answer is simple. If you do not know your philosophy, you will fall into an unbiblical one. Because most people do not have a well thought out philosophy, they find that the things they do are driven by one of three dictators: Tradition, Peer-pressure, or Pragmatism.

Tradition

Perhaps the easiest dictator to surrender to is old man Tradition. Tradition says, "We've always done it this way. Why bother changing now? It's working well enough." The danger here is that your ministry begins to be ruled by the weekly schedule and calendar of events instead of the Word of God. Your methods become stagnant and begin to rule how you minister. That is not to say that traditions are all bad, but if the only reason you do something is out of tradition, it probably won't accomplish much more than perpetuating the tradition.

How much of what you do falls into this category? Often these are good things (Sunday school, prayer meeting, teen activities, etc.), but they need to be examined regularly so that they remain vital tools for focusing the youth's heart and mind on God.

Peer Pressure

The next dictator, Peer Pressure, pushes us from every side. It's natural to desire and enjoy the good opinion of others, but when that becomes the reason you do what you do, it has become a dictator. Peer Pressure says things like, "Why don't you bring your youth group to the rally? Every other church in town is coming." Or it may be subtler as you talk with youth leaders from other churches who ask how many teens you have in youth group. The desire to boast greater results may tempt you to adopt unbiblical methods of bringing in teens.

How much of what you do is guided by a desire to please people around you? You don't need to go out of your way not to please people, but be sure that above all else you seek to please and glorify God with all you do.

Pragmatism

This last dictator uses two powerful words to control his subjects: "It works!" How often have you heard something like this, "John bought such-and-such a program, and his attendance at youth activities increased by 50 percent!" Everyone who hears of such great results rushes out and buys the program as well hoping for a similar outcome in their ministry. However, is the fact that something works a biblical measure? No, the Bible gives many examples of God-ordered ministries that did not bring great results even though God commanded them.

In Jeremiah's day, he faithfully preached the pure Word of God in the exact manner that God commanded. Yet in man's eyes he was a failure. The teachers of falsehood had much "greater" results. Paul said in Galatians chapter five that if he began to teach the need for circumcision, he would have much greater results. However, he rejected the possible results because he was bound by God's truth. Perhaps the greatest example is Jesus himself. During His earthly ministry He did many unpopular things in order to live according to God's will. Even His teaching of truth caused many of the hearers to turn away from Him (John 6:60-69).

Do you measure your ministry based on how well your programs work? If so, you are judging by the wrong standard. Never sacrifice God's enabling power for the short-lived results of man's schemes.

Evaluating Your Philosophy

If you see the influence of one or more of these dictators in your life, it's time to step back and take measurement of your ministry philosophy. What is it that makes you do the things you do? What do you really believe to be your purpose as a youth leader? Are the things you do in your ministry reflective of what you believe your purpose to be?

Numbers vs. Maturity

Perhaps the greatest part of determining your philosophy of ministry is deciding what your goal or purpose of ministry should be. There are many goals one may pursue: size, recognition, involvement, etc. However, the Bible gives a very different emphasis for ministering to others. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul tells us that spiritual leaders are among the many gifts God gives to the church. In the very next verse he tells us the purpose of these leaders. They are to fully equip believers to do the work of the ministry that they may edify (build up) the body of Christ. This is not accomplished through programs and human knowledge. Instead it comes as the believer grows in his knowledge of the faith and of Son of God (v. 13) and ultimately begins to reflect God's glory as he lives the Christ-like life (v. 15). Notice that Paul doesn't even mention increasing numerically until he reaches the end of verse 16.

From this we see that God will indeed grow His church, but it will not be through humanistic gimmicks and marketing. If your ministry is to biblically grow in expanse, it must first grow in spiritual depth. First minister to deepen believers' walks with the Lord, and then they will begin to show forth His glory (character). It is at that point that they will be able to edify and increase the body of Christ.

Nature of a Maturity Ministry

The purpose of youth ministry will be discussed further in the next chapter, but a couple of points need to be made here. First, the hardest part of deciding that you want to see your youth mature in Christ is the fact that such a ministry is hard to measure. It is much easier to say the ministry grew by twenty teens this year than to say our teens grew 32% in maturity. Maturity is easy to detect but hard to measure.

Second, if maturing in Christ is your goal, you will have to get your eyes off of *your* ministry and *your* calendar and onto God. Maturity only comes in the Christian life as we focus on God through His Word and His works. If you want to see maturity in your teens, you must lead by showing them a life focused on God. This is why Positive Action For Christ believes that the most important element of any philosophy is a God-Focus!

Defining a God-Focus

At the heart of the God-Focused approach to life and ministry is the assumption that everything God does is for His glory. When God created the universe, He did it so that the heavens would declare His glory—His character, His attributes, and His works (Ps. 19:1). He had the same purpose when He created man (Rev. 4:10-11). God continues to work in the affairs of men so that His name will receive praise and glory (Ps. 107:8). Christ's birth and earthly ministry revealed God's glory in human form (Luke 2:20; John 12:27-30). The gospel is being spread today to bring glory to God (Ps. 106:8; Col. 1:25-27). At the end of the world, everyone will be forced to proclaim Christ as Lord unto the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

If this is God's focus, shouldn't it be our focus as well? First Corinthians 10:31 says that whether we eat, drink, or do anything, we must do it to bring God glory. Paul is saying that even in the most commonplace events of life (eating and drinking) we are to keep our focus on glorifying our glorious God.

If we can have a God-Focus even in our eating and drinking, certainly that must carry over into other areas of our lives as well. Above all else, the God-Focus ought to guide our ministry for Him. Do you pursue the glory of God in your relationship with Him, or do you simply take God for granted? Is glorifying God your focus in ministering to the youth, or are you simply looking to increase attendance or manage behavior?

What then is the God-Focus? Simply put, it is our prayerful pursuit of the glory and grace of God in every area of our lives. We read the Word looking for His glory. As we preach, we are introducing our audience to the glory and grace of our great God. As we work with teenagers, we desire above all that they see God for who He is. They ought to leave Bible study awed by God's greatness and grace, not just feeling guilty because of their own sinfulness.

Living with a God-Focus

The natural response to what you have just read is to say, "I can do this" and to begin to make a list of how you are going to make yourself and your ministry God-Focused. However, this response misses the mark of what we are discussing. The God-Focus is not about you, but instead it is about Him. To see and display the glory of God, you must first have the grace of God.

Human effort can never earn you salvation, and human effort cannot give you the ability you need to live the God-Focused life. Paul rebukes the Galatian believers for just such thinking in Galatians 3:1-3. False teachers had convinced the Galatians that grace was good for salvation, but after that the Christian life depended upon human effort. Paul strongly rebukes them for such thinking, and yet we also are moved easily from dependence on God's grace to a humanistic self-reliance.

If we desire to live with a God-Focus, we must grasp the two greatest themes of Scripture—the glory of God and the grace of God. These two themes are intertwined and dependent on one another. If we are to see God’s glory and magnify it in our lives, we must have His grace working in us. God created us to be dependent upon Him. When you are focused upon His glory and depending on His grace, you are prepared to minister to others by showing them His glory and grace.

Ministering with a God-Focus

The question of how to minister with a God-Focus brings us back again to the matter of philosophy. What do you want to accomplish in the lives of the teens you are ministering to? Do you want to simply change the way they act or think, or do you want to lead them into a growing relationship with God? Ministering with a God-Focus means that your mission in every lesson consists in sharing God’s glory and grace with those God has called you to minister to.

Ministering God’s Glory

In order to show your teens God’s glory, you must first encourage them in the practice of thinking about God. If we are honest, most of us spend very little time thinking about God in our day-to-day activities. Yet the Bible is very clear that God created the world to point our eyes to Him. It may sound obvious, but if your teens are going to become God-Focused, they must first spend time focusing on God.

More specifically, they must spend time focusing on God’s glory. His glory is the whole of His character, attributes, and works that make Him uniquely God. There are many ways that your teens can focus on God’s glory: studying the names of God, seeing how God has worked in Scripture, meditating on the providential works of God in their own lives, etc. Whatever you can do as a youth leader to show God to your students will be helpful in promoting a God-Focus.

Ministering God’s Grace

A second aspect of the God-Focus is showing your teens that they can experience a vibrant, powerful relationship with God. It is one thing to be introduced to all of God’s glory, but showing them the grace of God personally available to them is equally life-changing. The Almighty God desires to strengthen us with might in the inner man. The God of all peace wants us to know Him that we might experience the peace that passes understanding. When the teens see God’s grace, the God-Focus becomes more than just how they should think; it becomes the very means of power to live as a Christian.

The path to experiencing God’s grace runs through Calvary. On the cross, Christ not only took our punishment, but He provided us full access to the grace of God. This is the gospel! When we treat the gospel as merely a message of salvation—something we once did—our teens miss out on a vital aspect of the gospel message. Second Peter 1:1–4 speaks not only of obtaining faith through the gospel (salvation), but it also says that the same knowledge of Christ supplies us with everything we need for “life and godliness” (sanctification). The gospel is a message we need every day, especially as believers.

It is in God’s grace that we find the ability to see God for Who He truly is and the strength to live the Christian life day by day. In Titus 2:11–15, Paul tells us that God has revealed His grace first of all to provide the only means of salvation. Salvation is by grace alone, but Paul continues explaining the purpose of God’s grace. That grace also provides the means of turning from the idols of this world to live the God-Focused life in this generation.

Thus a God-Focus gives you and your teens not only a right picture of God, but it also gives them a correct picture of man. Each of us is created dependent upon the grace of God. Without His grace, no man can come

to salvation. Without His grace, no man can escape from the bondage of ungodliness and worldly desires. We must have the grace of God if we are to see and show forth His glory in this world.

Touching Lives with the God-Focus

Ministering with a God-Focus does not mean that you never make application to the lives of your teenagers. On the contrary, it gives much more force when an application is made because it is based on the person and character of God and not just a list of do's and don'ts for being a "good Christian." Paul himself makes many pointed applications in his epistles, but note three important facts.

First, the application sections almost always *follow* the doctrinal sections of the letters where Paul reveals who God is and how He is working. Second, he draws the applications from the doctrinal truth already presented. Finally, even in the application sections, Paul deals with the heart, not merely the outward conformity.

What does this mean to you as a youth leader? When you teach or preach to your teens, it is vitally important to make much of God. When you make applications, let them flow from God's character. For instance, you would not say, "Don't lie because lying is wrong." Instead you would say, "Don't lie because God is truth, and when we lie, we are violating His very character and giving the world an inaccurate picture of who He is." Thus when the temptation to lie comes, the teen will see it primarily as a sin against a personal God rather than a sin against some impersonal list of right and wrong.

Conclusion

In conclusion, having a God-Focused ministry both fulfills our purpose of glorifying God and shows our teens the only true means by which they can be saved and live the Christian life. To leave God out of the equation or even tack Him on at appropriate places creates an atmosphere with no motivation for truly developing a heart and life wholly given over to God. If we as the youth leaders do not focus our ministries on God, how can we expect that the teens will focus their lives on Him? This leads naturally to the topic of the next chapter, "The Purpose of a God-Focused Youth Ministry."