

## YOUTH MINISTRY MINUTE

### the speed of trust

I've been poring over the results of our big *State of Youth Ministry* study, even sleeping with a big stack of our study results under my pillow hoping something might sneak into my brain at night. (It didn't work, but I did get a crick in my neck.) I can't stop thinking about one of the common threads that runs through the thousands of comments we collected...

*Youth pastors say the biggest thing they're "dying for" is volunteer leaders they can count on.*

Now, many say they've had a lot of success getting people to volunteer, but they've had little success in *developing leaders*. "I have plenty of help, but not many leaders," says one leader in our "State of Youth Ministry" article (page 58). Youth pastors don't feel they can trust their volunteers with real ministry responsibilities because they can't trust them to *lead*. And they don't know how to develop the leadership abilities that will fuel their trust.

And that brings me to the most-excellent book *The Speed of Trust*, written by Stephen M.R. Covey (son of the Stephen Covey). The younger Covey one-upped his father with a brilliant book—it's so practical and wise and insightful that you wonder how it's possible that no one has written on the overwhelming impact of trust before. Here's the truth Covey's book hangs on: "I contend that the ability to establish, grow, extend, and restore trust is not only vital to our personal and interpersonal well-being; it is *the* key leadership competency of the new global economy. I'm also convinced that in every situation, nothing is as fast as the speed of trust."

By "speed of trust" Covey means that a lot gets done in high-trust environments and little gets done in low-trust environments. I suspect low-trust environments are the culprit behind youth leader burnout, staff conflict, stagnant growth, and contentious relationships with parents. If you're leading a high-trust ministry team, you're probably loving your ministry. If you're not, you're probably hating it.

So how do you transform *adult helpers* into *adult leaders* you can trust? A few of Covey's gems apply.

**1** You first have to be trustworthy before you can influence a high-trust environment. Covey says: "The first job of a leader is to inspire trust. The ability to do so, in fact, is a prime differentiator between a manager and a leader." Another way to say this: *You have to be a leader to develop leaders.*



BY RICK LAWRENCE

Leaders inspire trust because they live in what Covey calls "the four cores of credibility":

- **Integrity**—Are you congruent, inside and out? Do you consistently act out of your values?
- **Intent**—Do you have hidden agendas and camouflaged motives?
- **Capabilities**—Are you a passionate learner? How teachable are you? Do you come through when others need you to?
- **Results**—Do you have a track record of getting difficult things done? Are you a go-to person in your church?

**2** To develop leaders, you have to give them what Covey calls "smart trust." You'll never grow if you pay lip service to entrusting them with responsibilities but cover your butt by micro-managing. Smart trust means that you have a propensity to trust people with important roles, balanced by a fierce commitment to analyze their results. It means your default setting is to give away responsibilities, but you're a realist. Smart-trust youth leaders recognize the trust they've been given—they will not sacrifice the spiritual or physical health of their teenagers for the sake of leadership development, and they will not sacrifice their own spiritual or physical health by holding on to all important responsibilities.

**3** Give the gift of belief. No one (besides my wife) has fueled my own growth—both personally and in my ministry—more than my friend Bob Krulish, the director of the pastoral staff at my church. Bob passionately believes in me. He knows I can produce, but he's not after production. He pays close attention to me because he enjoys me. He sees me well, and he tells me what he sees. So many times Bob has surprised me by writing me a note of support, showing up at a ministry event I'm leading, or inviting me into significant responsibilities. If we want our helpers to become leaders, we need to move toward them like Bob has in my life—with passionate belief. ■

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#### favorites

- BOOKS—*Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas
- MUSIC—*The Works*, Jonatha Brooke; *Tell Tale Signs*, Bob Dylan
- LEADERSHIP TRAINING—Our National Youth Ministry Conference (Feb. 27–March 2—[youthministry.com/conference](http://youthministry.com/conference))