

By The Time I'm Done With You.

Do you remember the last time you lost something important and desperately wanted to find it? I recall those moments all too well. In the midst of my searches, I even had moments where I could imagine the lost object sitting in the place where I believed I left it. I can also feel the disappointment I experienced when it was not to be found.

Our imagination can play tricks on us, but it can also be a very helpful tool. In 1960 Maxwell Maltz wrote a book entitled *Psycho-Cybernetics*. Many motivational and self-help speakers based their principles on Maltz's idea of "a positive outcome through visualization of that positive outcome." (*Psycho-Cybernetics* Maxwell Maltz; Plastic Surgeon Tries to Heal Inner Scars, Los Angeles Times, November 2, 1973).

When I was in college, I took a class called "Theory and Technique of Team Sports Skills." In one of the

lectures, we talked about how to coach an athlete on shooting proper basketball free throws. The professor talked about the usefulness of psycho-cybernetics and imagining what one would do to complete the perfect free throw.

Have you ever imagined what it would look like for a high school senior in your ministry to be fully-disciplined and perfectly ready to enter the next stage of his or her life? What would you want that student to know? How would you want him or her to act?

While we know that no one on this earth is perfect, we need to "aim high" in our vision for loving and equipping the youth that we shepherd. Accomplishing this is all but impossible if we are not willing to do the work of creating a profile describing the character of such a person. There is no one perfect description fitting all youth, so youth leaders can enjoy the freedom of creating a tailor-made vision for their youth.

Where do we start?

- 1) Begin with prayer. Ask God for insight and wisdom.
- 2) Include the primary principles Jesus taught us to live.
- 3) Take the best character traits of godly men and women throughout the Bible.
- 4) Develop a list of everything you believe should be in the profile. No initial list is too long.
- 5) Allow key parents, youth leaders, and students to review the list adding their own suggestions and input.
- 6) Edit, combine, and pare the list to a manageable, measurable number of qualities (somewhere between seven and twelve).
- 7) Publish the profile and put it to use. Let it influence your teaching, guide your curriculum choices

and be at the center of your ministry strategy.

About fifteen years ago I took the time to develop a "Profile of a Discipled Student." I was mentored through the process by patient volunteer leaders, older youth pastors, and students who sincerely wanted to grow. Over the years I have used this document in many different forms, given it different titles, and emphasized various parts. Below is the profile we have created in our ministry. I hope it will serve as an example for your reflection, prayer, and planning. Feel free to use it in any form—you don't even have to change the words!

When a student graduates from our ministry, he or she will exhibit these qualities:

- 1) **Love for God (Mark 12:30)**—Regularly participates in corporate and individual worship of God; disciplined in quiet times; internalizes the truth of sin, salvation, the sacraments, and God in three persons.
- 2) **Faithful to God and Others (Romans 12:1-2, 10)**—Practices spiritual disciplines; keeps appointments; fulfills commitments to others and projects through setting priorities; practices the holy life and integrity in living.
- 3) **Student of the Word (2 Timothy 2:15)**—Spends consistent time in the Word; changed behavior as a result of internalized truth; uses God's truth in everyday decisions; grows in the skills/disciplines of memorization of verses/significant passages or can identify the location of important stories and teachings.
- 4) **Prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17)**—Committed to regular times of prayer; initiates or suggests prayer in the midst of life circumstances.
- 5) **Critical Decision-Maker (1 Kings**

3:1-15, esp. v.9)—Demonstrates ability to decide right and wrong on an individual basis through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instruments of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.

- 6) **Life-Long Learner (2 Timothy 3:14)**—Lives a life of obedience and servanthood; asks thoughtful questions; seeks growth opportunities beyond "growth level" events and youth group experience; responds and acts on instruction.
- 7) **Life-Leader (1 Thessalonians 2:8)**—Knows how and is willing to be a witness; understands the spiritual battle and the need to be a positive influence through Godly example in word and deed.
- 8) **Commitment to the Community of Faith (Hebrews 10:19-25, esp. v.25)**—Values the fellowship of Christ's body and the variety of gifts to be used for "the common good" of the Church.