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PROTECT BY DR. JODY DEAN WITH DR. ALLEN JACKSON

Protect reignites the discussion on risk management in youth ministry. It's a valuable resource for anyone involved in youth ministry in churches or para-church organizations.

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PROTECT

A YOUTH WORKER'S GUIDE
TO NAVIGATING RISK

Protect: A Youth Worker's Guide to Navigating Risk

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PROTECT THE PRO

A YOUTH WORKER'S GUIDE
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BY DR. JODY DEAN WITH
DR. ALLEN JACKSON
FOREWORD BY GREG LOVE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	8
Introduction	12
PART 1: SHEPHERDING THROUGH CHARACTER	
Chapter 1: The Critical Component of Character by Dr. Allen Jackson	18
Chapter 2: Vetting the Volunteers by Dr. Jody Dean	22
Chapter 3: Making Money Matter by Dr. Jody Dean	27
PART 2: SHEPHERDING THE PEOPLE	
Chapter 4: Counseling Considerations by Dr. Allen Jackson	34
Chapter 5: Practicing Protective Procedures by Dr. Jody Dean	39
Chapter 6: Owning Online Obnoxiousness by Dr. Jody Dean	44
Chapter 7: Bursting the Bullying Balloon by Dr. Jody Dean	48
PART 3: THE SHEPHERD AS AN OVERSEER	
Chapter 8: Mastering Mandatory Reporting by Dr. Allen Jackson	54
Chapter 9: Supervision, Surveillance, and Security by Dr. Jody Dean	58
Chapter 10: Preparing Proper Policy by Dr. Jody Dean	62
Chapter 11: Keeping Up with the Kids by Dr. Jody Dean	66
Chapter 12: Unpacking the Unexpected by Dr. Jody Dean	70
PART 4: SHEPHERDING THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE	
Chapter 13: Facing Faulty Facilities by Dr. Jody Dean	76
Chapter 14: Tripping Up on Trips by Dr. Jody Dean	80
Chapter 15: Negating Negligence by Dr. Jody Dean	84
Chapter 16: Considering Contemporary Issues by Dr. Allen Jackson	88
Conclusion	92
About the Authors	97

FOREWORD

Writing the foreword for this book is an honor and a privilege because I hold the authors in the highest regard and I believe the subject matter to be of the utmost importance.

As I write this, I have been practicing law for nearly 30 years, primarily in the realm of child sexual abuse litigation, prevention, and risk management. I am a partner in the law firm Love & Norris, and a co-founder and Director of MinistrySafe and Abuse Prevention Systems. In these capacities, I serve thousands of organizations: churches of all denominations, para-church organizations, camps, schools, youth sports organizations, daycares, non-profits, and other child-serving entities. I am honored to work in this realm in a multitude of contexts, but my heart beats fast for the Church – particularly youth ministry.

In addition to practicing law since 1990, I am beginning my 23rd year of student ministry at Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth, TX. For the last several years, I have served as the speaker for our Student Ministry ski trips. At a recent trip to Winter Park, CO, my goal was to address the challenges and obstacles that teenagers face related to spiritual growth.

My challenge was two-fold:

1. *What* information do teens need to hear; and
2. *How* to deliver information in a manner that students were reached, without losing the seriousness of the message.

WHAT: THE MESSAGE

The focus of my messages was relatively straightforward: identifying and overcoming the barriers to spiritual growth faced by teenagers today. The message was important, but some teenagers are suspicious of authority and ready to ignore or reject instruction that requires change or inconvenience. My desire was not to burden them with another spiritual to-do list, but to show how Christ created the model and plan for abundant life.

HOW: THE DELIVERY

This part is tricky. As you no doubt know, unpacking spiritual truth in a manner that teenagers will understand, appreciate, appropriate, and apply takes a great deal of insight and creativity. The effectiveness of this endeavor has a great deal to do with the identity of the person communicating. Fortunately, I serve a population of teenagers who trust me as a “coach,” not a “referee.”

After my experience at our ski retreat, I very much appreciate the value of *Protect*. Drs. Jody Dean and Allen Jackson faced the same challenge: What information do youth workers need to hear; and how to deliver information in a manner that youth workers are reached, without losing the seriousness of the message.

WHAT: THE MESSAGE

The focus of *Protect* is relatively straightforward: what risks are inherent in youth ministry that must be understood and addressed to protect students and those who serve them? The subject matter is essential. And yet, if we're honest, many youth ministry leaders (like many teenagers) are ready to ignore or reject instruction that requires change or inconvenience. If this describes you, you have to be willing to work to overcome this tendency; the subject matter is that important.

HOW: THE DELIVERY

Clearly, Dean and Jackson have worked to avoid writing anything resembling a treatise on the law, also avoiding the typical reliance on guilt, threats, and fear to introduce relevant information and urge change. I believe you will find that *Protect* strikes the right balance: clear, but not intimidating; informative, but not over-the-top; serious, but not threatening. *Protect* is encouraging, in that most youth pastors can connect with one or two of the situations unpacked, and readers will quickly intuit that the writers know youth ministry and can save them a few unnecessary trips through the ditch.

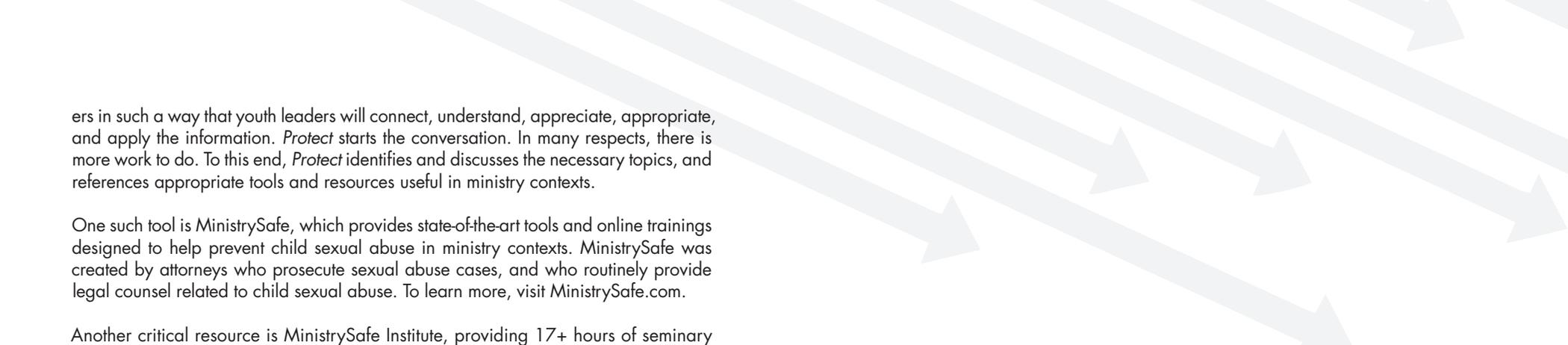
Much of the “how” of this book is related to the “who.” In youth ministry, there is a tendency among some youth ministry leaders to view older leaders as outdated and out of touch with the challenges unique to younger generations. Often they are right. At the same time, many youth ministry leaders rely heavily on the advice and suggestions of their peers, attending conferences or network gatherings where the speakers are just a few years older than they are. Unfortunately, many of these venues do not provide the information and understanding necessary to properly navigate the challenges facing youth ministry leaders today, especially those challenges related to risk management and child protection.

That's why the “who” of this book is so important. Jody Dean is a unique blend of youth ministry veteran and administrative consultant. He has taken on the responsibility of teaching and researching risk management at New Orleans Baptist Seminary, partnering with relevant voices including MinistrySafe.

Allen Jackson has served in youth ministry for almost 40 years. Through his work over the years at NOBTS, the Youth Ministry Institute, Youth Specialties, and elsewhere, thousands upon thousands of youth pastors in the United States have been coached by Dr. Jackson, and continue to count him as a friend, mentor, and role model.

PROTECT: THE BEGINNING OF THE ADVENTURE

As mentioned above, *Protect* communicates information unique to youth ministry lead-



ers in such a way that youth leaders will connect, understand, appreciate, appropriate, and apply the information. *Protect* starts the conversation. In many respects, there is more work to do. To this end, *Protect* identifies and discusses the necessary topics, and references appropriate tools and resources useful in ministry contexts.

One such tool is MinistrySafe, which provides state-of-the-art tools and online trainings designed to help prevent child sexual abuse in ministry contexts. MinistrySafe was created by attorneys who prosecute sexual abuse cases, and who routinely provide legal counsel related to child sexual abuse. To learn more, visit MinistrySafe.com.

Another critical resource is MinistrySafe Institute, providing 17+ hours of seminary level, cutting-edge online training meant to equip ministry leaders with an understanding of the issues surrounding child sexual abuse, and how best to navigate through them. Trainees who complete all course modules receive MinistrySafe Institute Certification, demonstrating a commitment to the highest standards of preventative protocols and training available to ministry leaders today. To learn more, visit MinistrySafeInstitute.com.

Drs. Jody Dean and Allen Jackson have created an excellent on-ramp and roadmap for youth ministers to begin the adventure regarding the protection of youth, staff, and the ministry. I applaud this vital effort to raise the barriers of protection in youth ministry occurring in American churches today.

Greg Love
Co-Founder/Director
MinistrySafe

INTRODUCTION

Youth ministry has matured since the days of chubby bunny and the egg-and-armpit relay. We have a tremendous opportunity to challenge an information-rich generation to consider the life-changing claims of Christ. A couple of other things have changed as well. First, the world has, in some ways, become more dangerous. Roads are more crowded, communities are less cohesive, and online communication has made students more connected—and accessible—than ever before. Second, parents have a reasonable yet heightened expectation that youth ministry, school, athletic teams, and other places inhabited by students would be safe—safe from dangerous conditions and safe from dangerous persons. *Protect* attempts to come alongside those who guide youth ministry in churches and parachurch organizations to engage in the practice of risk management.

My world was rocked in February 2015 when the accusations of sexual impropriety on the part of the youth minister at our church came to light. The accusations turned out to be true and likely the tip of the iceberg. I met with him, and he denied that anything occurred other than poor judgment with the wording of some text messages. As is often the case with predators, he was very convincing. It turns out he molested a student in the youth ministry through systematic grooming.

Our pastor modeled the right legal and ethical response to the criminal actions of a staff member, but by then it was too late to protect the young person involved. It was particularly offensive to me because I have taught this subject for years in my seminary classroom and conferences and workshops around the country. I have hosted my friend Greg Love and others who heroically kept the issue of child protection in front of youth ministers and churches. Yet it happened in my church.

I am reminded of the Surgeon General's warnings on cigarette packages. They have been on the edge or bottom of every pack that has been sold in America for the past four decades. Yet, they have become white noise, so that while smoking is understood as harmful to one's health, the dialogue about the danger has simply died down.

This book is an attempt to reignite the discussion on risk management in youth ministry. Protection of our students is the most urgent aspect of the conversation, both from predators and other harmful conditions in ministry. But protection for the ministry is also necessary: protection from harmful or useless practices, from damage to our witness, and for ministers and volunteers in an increasingly litigious culture.

Dr. Dean and I decided to write this book because it hasn't been done in a while. We are not lawyers, but we have consulted lawyers. We are not insurance people, but we have consulted insurance people. We are parents, ministers, and men who care deeply for students, the volunteers who work with them, and the churches that facilitate this crazy thing called youth ministry. We hope that we inspire confidence that youth ministry really can be both fun and safe. Finally, we want to honor King Jesus with our words, our practices, and our counsel.

A WORD ABOUT THOSE WHO HELPED US FRAME THE DISCUSSION

We were inspired and encouraged to write this book by many different people. Youth workers from around the country helped guide our discussions for a resource that would help them start a conversation with leaders and parents in their churches about the urgency to protect the people that gather on church campuses each week. Parents have guided our thoughts as we have sat with many crying over their child being robbed of their innocence by an adult who took advantage of their trust and harmed their child in some way. And students have stopped by the office, chatted with us at an event, or sent us an email that revealed the need for a resource that provided a collective starting point for conversation and resources to protect in one or more of the areas mentioned in this book.

A WORD ABOUT WHAT WE ARE NOT WRITING ABOUT

We chose not to be as detailed in the content as we might have been, but to instead provide an overview for each area as a point of discussion and information that would cause you to pray, discern, research, and choose how to protect your students, yourself, your ministry, and your church. We chose to leave the legal details to the lawyers. We chose to let the accountants explain the financial guidelines beyond common sense basics. We chose to let MinistrySafe help you understand volunteer screening after we made the case that you need to use applications and screening for volunteers and staff in the church.

We chose to not address all the hot topics of culture but tried instead to provide a conversation on the shifting culture and the need for us to consider the new norm as we chart new paths. You can read the headlines like we have relating to the issues involving ministry. Here are just a few that were in the news as we were beginning to write this book:

- In Washington, a youth pastor sent sexually explicit emails to a girl in the youth group. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison.
- A different type of risk happened in Florida, where a 15-passenger van transporting a church youth group rolled killing one person.
- In Oregon, another tragedy occurred during a retreat when a 15-year-old boy and an adult camp counselor fell into a pool at the base of a waterfall during a youth retreat involving multiple churches. Both drowned. The family of the boy sued the camp organizer and churches for \$13 million.¹

Headlines such as these abound. These examples are all tragic, and we pray they never occur at your church or while you are doing ministry. Stories like these helped motivate us to write this book.

YOUTH MINISTRY IS A STAFF POSITION

A shepherd's staff, that is. I read an article that discussed the staff a shepherd uses to do his job of tending the woolly ones.² The author mentioned three ways the staff is essential. The connection with care for the students with whom we minister and the youth ministry we lead was overwhelming to me.

First, the staff is used to gather newly-born lambs and make sure they are placed with their mother. In a large flock, the mother and child can become separated, and if the shepherd leaves a scent on the lamb, the ewe will reject her lamb. In the same way, we protect our students by making sure they are with those adult volunteers who will care for them in all the right ways.

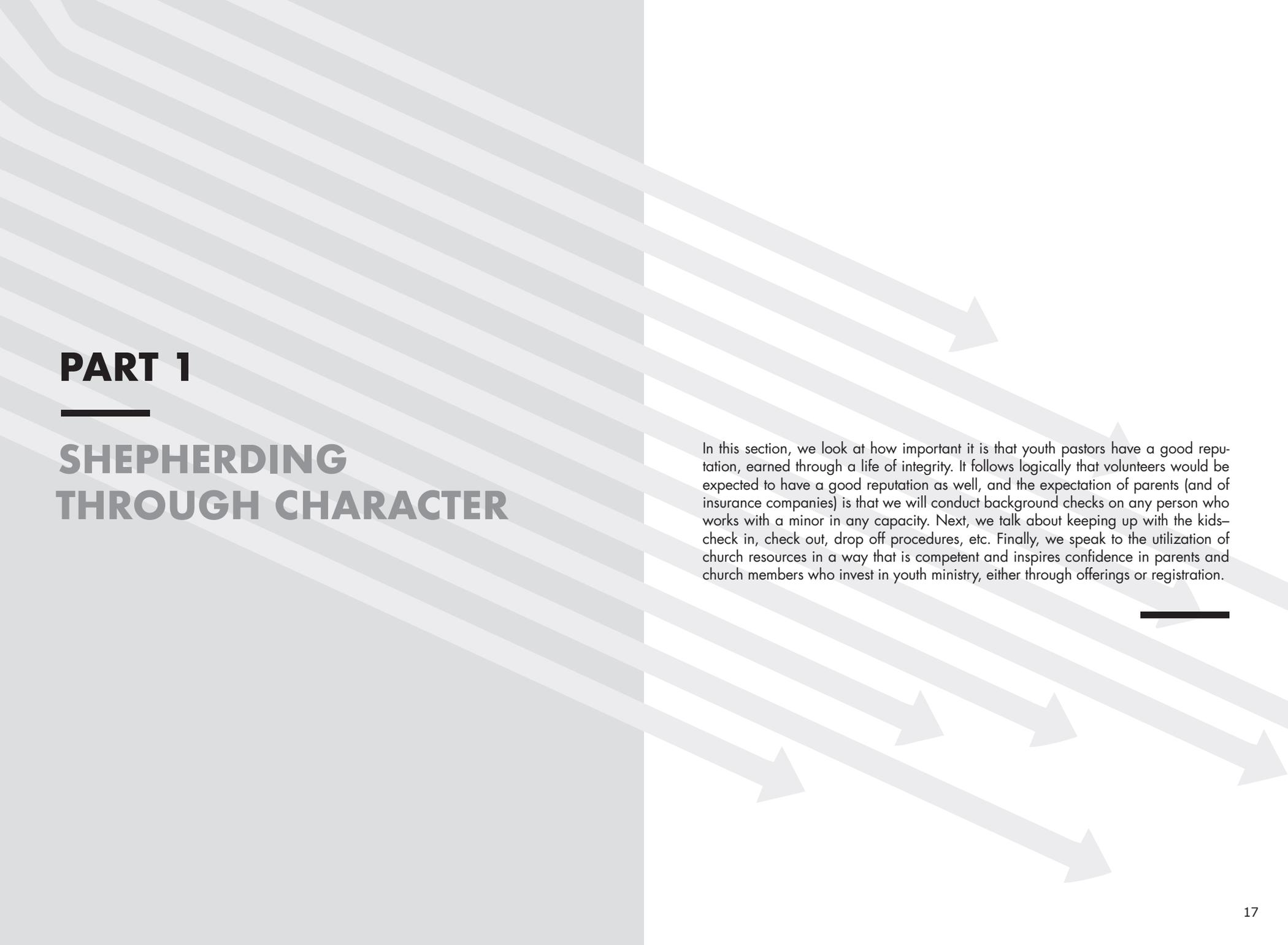
Secondly, the staff is used to draw sheep to the shepherd for inspection. The famous crook in the staff is used to make sure that the sheep are healthy and clear of environmental danger. Risk management means that we are "inspecting" students, alert to changes in their demeanor that might signal a problem, and always aware of surroundings and potential problems (i.e., volunteers, workers, peers, strangers, predators, etc.). A shepherd knows what to look for and is always examining the surroundings of his flock and those within the flock.

Finally, the staff is used to direct the sheep to places they need to go and away from places they don't need to go. The shepherd leads the flock so they do not stray or go in a different direction. Policies, protective measures, and procedures sometimes protect students from themselves. We know that teenagers are prone to wander toward risky behavior, like the sheep who tend to wander off, thinking the pasture is greener somewhere else. Risk management practices sometimes are the gentle prod that the shepherd gives to distracted or rebellious sheep. The prodding may be annoying and uncomfortable to the sheep, but it keeps them moving in the direction they need to go.

Before I leave the metaphor, I would also point out that first-century shepherds would frequently sleep while lying down across the opening to the sheepfold (pen) to make sure anything that would threaten the flock would have to come through him first. That is why Jesus, speaking of Himself said, "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." Without being overly dramatic, the hard work of putting into place practices that keep students and ministries as safe as possible is like a youth minister, pastor, or volunteer saying, "if you are going to get to my students, you have to come through me."

A final word of introduction. Throughout the book, we use the term "risk management" because we understand youth ministry involves the possibility of negative things happening. Kids have accidents, unforeseen and sometimes tragic situations occur, and sometimes harm comes the way of a student despite the most diligent practices. That is why the term is risk management and not risk elimination. If youth ministry were utterly free of any risk, it would not only be amazingly dull, it would also be completely static. Our job is to seek to make disciples among teenagers and adults while keeping potential risk to a minimum.

- Dr. Allen Jackson



PART 1

SHEPHERDING THROUGH CHARACTER

In this section, we look at how important it is that youth pastors have a good reputation, earned through a life of integrity. It follows logically that volunteers would be expected to have a good reputation as well, and the expectation of parents (and of insurance companies) is that we will conduct background checks on any person who works with a minor in any capacity. Next, we talk about keeping up with the kids—check in, check out, drop off procedures, etc. Finally, we speak to the utilization of church resources in a way that is competent and inspires confidence in parents and church members who invest in youth ministry, either through offerings or registration.

CHAPTER ONE: THE CRITICAL COMPONENT OF CHARACTER

BY DR. ALLEN JACKSON

I am glad that this chapter opens up our discussion. You might be a full-time youth pastor. You might be a part-time student minister. You might be a volunteer, a parent, a student, or a casual observer of youth ministry. But you wouldn't be reading this book if you didn't have concerns about making sure that students were protected in your student ministry. You already have an intuitive sense that things are not right in our world and that to the best of our ability, we should keep students from harm. Guess what? It starts with us.

Character matters. I am writing this after voters in the United States shocked the American media and the world by electing Donald Trump as our forty-fifth president. Throughout the campaign, character concerns about both candidates (Trump and Hillary Clinton) were cycled and recycled in the news. In an op-ed piece in the Washington Post, entitled, "The GOP is learning the hard way that character matters," conservative columnist Michael Gerson tried to get his arms around the discussion (and threw in a little C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* along the way):

Since Thomas Jefferson's concubine, Warren Harding's love nest and Bill Clinton's innovative intern program, Americans have debated the role of character in leadership. But the concept of character has often been defined too narrowly. Sexual ethics — involving a range of behaviors from doomed longing to cruel exploitation — is a part of it, but not the most significant part. "The sins of the flesh are bad," wrote C.S. Lewis, "but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and back-biting; the pleasures of power, of hatred."³

I am afraid the many of the issues we talk about in this book are mentioned or implied in Gerson's article. And sometimes, we define the concept of character too narrowly for those of us who are privileged to work with teenagers and their parents. Character is the framework of belief we bring to our position as youth worker. It is our perception of who we are in relationship to God, to students, to families, our pastor, and our

community. Its importance cannot be overstated.

A minister or volunteer who keeps their character above reproach has put in place the best defense against any accusation that comes their way. Let me illustrate. If someone falsely accuses me of misconduct, either formally or in an impromptu gossip session, one response by the hearer could be "Wait a minute buddy. I know Allen and what you say is inconsistent with all I know him to be." On the other hand, someone might say, "Well, I can see that. Allen forwarded a questionable email just the other day and last week, he told me a vulgar joke. I hope it isn't true, but it wouldn't shock me." Now, which response do I want when a false accusation is brought forward?

Among many biblical instructions regarding character, Paul wrote to Timothy regarding the qualities of a minister (and by implication, volunteer):

"[1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. [2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? [6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. [8] Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. [9] They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. [10] And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless."

- 1 Timothy 3:1-10

Without getting sidetracked by all the tangents this passage has taken the church on, it should be noted that Paul mentions character more than he does ability or skill. He challenges Timothy to identify and deploy leaders who are temperate, prudent, respectable, gentle, peaceable, not greedy or materialistic, dignified, and not proud. Paul also wants the leaders in the church to have good reputations in the church, but also the community. Character matters.

The possibility of an accusation is not the only motivation for establishing a good reputation. First of all, we answer to God. The Psalmist said, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). I hope that I am motivated by the gratitude I feel because Jesus has redeemed me, and I do not want to disregard that grace gift. Additionally, the example of a life lived with integrity is a great living lesson for students. If we as youth workers model obedience and excellence, some students will observe and imitate. (A caution here: we cannot act one way in front of students to be a good

example and another way when we are alone or with other adults. Students can see through hypocrisy like nobody else can.)

One system of checks and balances when discussing character is accountability. Accountability is a popular buzzword, yet it is a critical component that requires devoted and constant attention in the life of all disciples, but especially in this context. As I said in the last paragraph, each of us should understand that we are accountable to God as Christians for our thoughts, our actions, and our example. Also, Christians are accountable to the local body of believers that enlisted them to serve. In 2 Samuel, David finally yielded to accountability when Nathan confronted him with his sin. As a result, reconciliation with God and man could begin, though the consequences of David's choices remained.

Another level of accountable relationship is to the church as a body of believers. We youth ministers are given what is referred to as "fiduciary trust," meaning that we are to care for something or someone entrusted to us in a way that is in their best interest. Parents, other staff, church leaders all expect us to set up systems, activities, programs, and relationships that are in the best interest of teenagers.

The congregation should provide oversight to the work and by extension, the character of the leaders.

Each person is accountable to their family for the life they lead in private as well as public. The broader community and even society as a whole bring a level of accountability for the local church and its leaders. "Biblically we are to be accountable to God, to the Christian community, and, in some ways, to civic government and the community in which we minister. The Lord has created us with the need to be accountable to him and others. When we aren't, we're not only disobedient to God's Word, we're likely to get ourselves into trouble, even scandal."⁴ In other words, we represent our church in the way we conduct ourselves.

My friend, Troy Temple, identified in his doctoral dissertation character qualities related to effective youth ministry.⁵ Among the qualities that facilitate fiduciary trust were:

1. Be above reproach in conduct with youth and adults.
2. Be authentic so what they say matches what they do.
3. Have a humility grounded in obedience to God.
4. Seek to be led by the Spirit.
5. Be a supporter of the senior or lead pastor in word and attitude.
6. Contribute to church staff unity.
7. Demonstrate integrity in finances both personal and ministerial.
8. Have a high regard for the truth.
9. Demonstrate personal discipline in their personal life: body, mind, and time management.

10. Be committed to moral purity.
11. Be emotionally stable with very few mood swings.

Character matters in our appearances. The ability to "be above reproach" (#1) is an external evaluation, and the only data that people can gather is the observation that one conducts relationships with integrity. To follow through with verbal commitments (#2, #8) is to establish a baseline for trust. To support church leadership and foster unity (#5, #6) is to affirm and respect authority.

To demonstrate integrity in finances (#7) and to demonstrate personal discipline in life management (#9) is to exemplify the biblical principle of faithfulness in the small things = ability to handle large things (Matthew 25:23). Increasingly, credit scores, debt portfolio, and financial health are legitimate issues when a youth pastor is called to a local church. Personal discipline in personal fitness and time management is rightly connected to discipline in protecting students.

Character shows through work ethic, through reaction under stress, through attention to detail, through punctuality. Whether we like it or understand it, the perception of a youth pastor's or youth volunteer's ability to manage the safety and well-being of students in our care.

Character is "inside out" rather than "outside in." The desire to be a person of integrity should not be based on fear of being caught, accused, or sued. Instead, our prayer is that we cultivate a lifestyle such that our desire matches with David's. We should want God to refine our heart.

Thomas Paine once said, "Reputation is what men and women think of us. Character is what God and the angels know of us."⁶ I would affirm Paine, who was known for his common sense (pun intended), but I would add that reputation (what men and women think of us) is essential as it inspires confidence and deflects accusations. However, character (what God knows of us) is the essence of protecting our life, ministry, family, and future.