

TNT@TNU PHILOSOPHY

The subject of spiritual gifts is one that the Apostle Paul considered important enough to address at length three times in the New Testament. His words are strong: the gifts are given by the Spirit based on God's grace, not our own worthiness and are given for the good of the whole body of Christ; gifts are from the Spirit and should serve to unify, not divide us; the use of gifts to help the user and the recipient grow to maturity and stability in the faith. Perhaps his strongest admonition is in Romans 12:6, where he says (paraphrase), "If you have a gift, USE IT with all the Spiritual power you have!"

Talent is a Gift from God

The principles used here can also apply to the use of one's talents. Our talent is a gift from God, and an indication of His grace, not our speciality. Our talents are to be used to help the Church. Our goal is unity and maturity. With the talents we have, God expects us to develop and use them to become the best we can be, with His power flowing through us as our spiritual resource.

Reach for the Stars

Top Nazarene Talent is our vehicle by which talent can be developed, channeled, and used for Jesus. Teens are in a tug-of-war; the world wants their talents, their very lives and so does the Church! We must be diligent to provide the quality of opportunities for personal development that challenge youth to their fullest potential, realizing that when they do so IN CHRIST, the rewards and fulfillment have the eternal significance that the world cannot offer. There is no room in the kingdom for half-heartedness.

Personal Development

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT is a necessary part of TNT@TNU, yet within the context of being all we can be in Christ, not for personal gain. COMPETITION is also a part of TNT@TNU, yet again within a Christian understanding. When you compete, you compete against what you know you can do. If you do your best, you are a winner. Competing with others helps you try harder. Runners will tell you the better times are set when one is running against competition, rather than alone. Your attitude toward your competitor must first reflect that we are there to help each other become better. If he receives the trophy, you are a part of his victory because you helped him to run faster, sing better, jump higher. If you receive the award, you feel the same about him.

Trophies and awards provide a secondary motivation, realizing that such is necessary to this stage of adolescence, and helps the process. Yet it is of primary importance that you know you are better, and everyone else is better, because you have participated. Since Jesus is the source of talent for all of us, we can rejoice in Him for the talent of all. You can rest assured that He will use me (and others) in the place where my talents can best function, and be happy, rather than becoming bitter because someone else has more talent in a certain area than you have.

The Proper Perspective

It is extremely important that NYI leaders work with young people (and parents) in understanding the Christian view of competition. We cannot shield our youth from competition—they are now, and will continue to be involved in competition in their lives in school, job, etc. What we must do is help them cope and function effectively, and with a Christian perspective in the midst of it.

EXAMPLES

What are some of the implications?

A bible quiz director who emphasizes the importance of the scriptures and a love for "neighbor" team on the 20th question when the score is tied... A teen who takes the time to compliment each person in his

vocal competition event after they have performed, even though his own performance was clearly superior... A basketball coach who deals more with how his guys play together and handle themselves, than teaching intimidation or complaining about officiating... A tennis coach who cries with the person who lost the finals, yet also helps her hold her head up with confidence in her own God-given ability... A sponsor who, instead of challenging an obviously unfair decision, helps the teens, under his supervision understand that, though life is not always fair, we can do all things through Christ... A district president who, after a lost volleyball match, witnesses to the girls about God's love and strength.

We have seen all of these in TNT@TNU competitions, and know that those teens involved carry away perspectives about the competition forever changed by their experience.

Local Involvement

Top Nazarene Talent also means LOCAL INVOLVEMENT. As is true with NYI, everything we do, at all levels, is geared to involve that local teen in an on-going, yearlong ministry. TNT is not just a time when each district heads up to Trevecca for a weekend of fun and competition. TNT is a process of involvement in talent development from the local church to the zone to the district to the region and back to the local church. At whatever level a teen operates and achieves, he is a winner.

TNT Means More

The district TNT coordinator and the competition directors must do all they can to help the local churches develop TNT participation in their church. It may begin as early as summer, then with the district convention, then on zone tour, with workshops, with festivals, with whatever means they may have to promote teens finding their talents and developing them for Jesus. The district TNT event then becomes more than a "once-a-year-hang-up-a-sign-and-let's-see-who-goes-to-Trevecca" day. It becomes the culmination of all that has been happening in the local churches. TNT@TNU provides a final climax to a year's work, but also is a "launching pad" into TNT for the local church for the next year as teens return to their churches "fired up" and ready to do more.

Personal Significance

This is why each level of TNT must be able to stand alone, have merit, and be valid in itself. Trophies and awards should be given at the district and regional levels. If a teen does not "advance" to the next level of competition, whatever he achieved in the previous level is significant. More teens will be involved, and more talent will be developed. Districts receive the eternal rewards for the number of teens who made an effort to participate and improve, whether they ever win the TNT@TNU Grand Trophy or not.

Training for Leadership

Finally, TNT@TNU is TRAINING FOR LEADERSHIP. This area is where we have won or lost the battle for the church twenty years before we realize we fought it. Some of us remember the "good 'ole days" of NYPS service. The programs weren't always that good, but what happened inside of us was. The NYPS Hour was largely abandoned in our media blitzed age. Yet TNT@TNU can fill the void in helping our teens become equipped for leadership, in public ministry, in discipline, and in working well with others. Whether it is singing, public speaking, creative writing, art, math, business, preaching, or quizzing, a teen is developing his own leadership skills. Even individual and team sports provide an arena of leadership development that will "plug-in" to the church now and for years to come.

Excitement

With all the modern conveniences of our day, teens can be bored easily. TNT@TNU can be one element of the total NYI program that can challenge them. Being a part of the TNT@TNU program at all levels can be exciting!

Making it Happen

What does it take to make it happen? As in all other programs within the total ministry of Nazarene Youth International, good adult leadership is very important. The good news is that teens are not the only ones who reap the benefits of being involved in TNT@TNU. As leaders, adults can grow from TNT@TNU. Let's make it happen.