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A STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING STUDENTS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION
FOR THE FALLS CHURCH THAT REVERSES SYSTEMIC ABANDONMENT

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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MAY 2012

A Strategy for Engaging Students in Spiritual Formation for The Falls Church that Reverses Systemic Abandonment

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The purpose of this paper is to develop a theologically informed and contextually sensitive plan for healthy youth praxis within The Falls Church, which attempts to address the systemic abandonment of adolescence such that the adult community assimilates and adopts youth into the life of the church through positive relationships.

The Falls Church is a historic, growing Anglican Church located in Northern Virginia. Four years ago, the congregation voted to re-align denominational affiliation ties from the United States Episcopal Church to CANA, The Coalition of Anglicans in America.

Student ministry of The Falls Church has grown numerically in the past three years and has had a rich history of outreach and discipleship youth work in the Washington D. C. suburbs since the 1970s, yet has not fully addressed the adoption and assimilation of young people by the adults in the community. The culture of youth assimilation is desired by the senior pastor and church leadership, but not practiced to the extent needed to support adolescents in a healthy way. Youth ministry is a high priority of The Falls Church.

The Washington D. C. suburbs create a high expectation for youth to perform academically, athletically, and to excel in social status. This seems to drive families into a fast-paced lifestyle, and these values are carried over into our church community. The cultural fragmentation of the family interjects this value into our community. With its rich history, the diverse educational components create a fragmented program and unintentionally work against the development of biblical community. The desire for the congregation to be a “family of families,” is undermined by the effective development of the separate ministries.¹ Young people have been delegated to their own program and miss the blessings of intergenerational ministry.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 288

¹ Dennis B Guernsey, *New Design for Family Ministry* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries International, 1982), 100.

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INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has worked with youth for more than twenty years would agree youth work is not what it used to be. “Old” youth workers reminisce that there was a time when the building was packed, programs were full and the youth were much more respectful and engaged. Strong Young Life Clubs were in the hundreds and church youth groups were active and flourishing. Whether it was the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s, I am not sure, but it is not like it used to be.

For the most part, youth work in churches has become professionalized and adults who serve in this vocation have more resources and church-wide support than ever. Youth Ministry majors are developing all over the country. Several seminars and events are attracting thousands of youth workers to help them gain new ideas and encouragement. Some church youth room facilities rival entertainment centers with multiple large-screen televisions and media experiences that would never have been dreamed of in the 1970s. Many senior pastors of large churches in America were youth pastors decades ago and desire to see youth work as a high priority in their churches, as they promised themselves if they ever got to those positions. Youth ministry books fill the shelves of youth workers grasping for that one idea, one key, to developing a “successful youth ministry.” The examples have mostly failed them. Churches of four hundred people cannot replicate a Willow Creek or Saddleback.

An article from *USA Today* was left on my desk last fall, titled “‘Forget the Pizza Parties,’ Teens Tell Church” dated August 11th, 2010.¹ I read it quickly² and at first missed that a former member of my youth group was quoted in it. It explained to me why he had not returned my numerous phone calls last year. He told how he no longer believed in Christ and was not interested in church. This is just one of many publications that expresses this disconnect of youth to congregations all over America. Other publications are titled, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Faith . . . And How to Bring them Back*;³ *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do To Stop It*;⁴ and *The Last Christian Generation*.⁵ Young people across America are spending more time with their computers and much less time with their youth groups.⁶ From the titles of these publications alone, it can be seen that there is a clear disconnect of youth and congregations.

The purpose of this ministry focus paper is to point out areas where adults abandon young people and determine some of the consequences of this abandonment. A plan will be introduced to reverse this disenfranchisement of young people by providing them with a healthy youth ministry. The youth ministry of The Falls Church will be

¹ Cathy Lynn Grossman and Stephanie Steinberg, “‘Forget the Pizza Parties,’ Teens tell Churches,” *USA Today* (August 11, 2010), http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-08-11-teenchurch11_ST_N.htm (accessed January 22, 2011).

³ Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith...and How to Bring Them Back* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010).

⁴ Ken Ham, Britt Bemmer and Todd Millard, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids will Quit Church and What You Can do to Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009).

⁵ Josh McDowell, *The Last Christian Generation* (Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006).

⁶ In Grossman and Steinberg’s article, they quoted David Kinnaman, President of the Barna Group, as saying “Talking to God may be losing out to Facebook.”

targeted in attempting to push back this abandonment and integrate young people relationally into the life of the community of the church.

My youth ministry training instructed me repeatedly that Scripture is the message book and the method book.⁷ It is the message book that communicated the journey of redemption. As stated in the first chapter of Isaiah, though humanity's sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. God has provided a way for humankind to receive redemption through Jesus Christ. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Redemption is for sinners and anyone can be redeemed.

Scripture is also the method book, showing dynamic, real relationships that the people of Israel had with their children, Paul had with his churches, and Jesus had with his disciples. The methods are shown years later as the Church attempts to communicate this message to a generation that is alone and frustrated by the unmet needs storing up inside and out. Youth ministers may ask how Jesus cared for this group of men; how Paul related to his converts and gave himself to them; and how the law will be communicated to the next generation.

I believe that the method of youth ministry needed today is one of investing in lives of young people and battling against their experience of adult abandonment. To reverse this systemic abandonment and disconnection is a needed goal in local congregations. This is not easy, and to be done with Christ-centered relationships that cannot be taught by an outline, booklet or seminar. It is to be handed down person to person, group to group, within the context of a healthy intergenerational community of

⁷ Lois Lebar, *Focus on People in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell Books, 1968), 47.

faith. Local churches need to embrace a philosophy within an active youth program that integrates young people into the life of a church.

The period known as adolescence has seemed to increase in years. Although causality is difficult to determine, the lifestyles of American families and cultural social settings have contributed to the extension of the youth experience (adolescence) into the late twenties. The marginalization of young people may have contributed to their loss of identity and autonomy. They are lacking intergenerational community and seem to only look to their peers for answers.

I am reminded of a scene in the recent movie, *Juno*.⁸ After this young high school girl Juno has gone (alone) several times to purchase a pregnancy test at the local drug store and finds it to read positive again, she calls her best girlfriend. The first adult in the movie she sees has no compassion at all and seems to mock her in a mean-spirited way. The girlfriend is of no or little help, mixing giggles with emotional screeches as she doles out advice to this young pregnant teenager (child). When teenagers are alone and disconnected from adults, they have few places to turn outside their same-age peers. It is like the blind leading the blind. They have never been through this type of experience and wander around searching for answers that an older, experienced person could assist with, if they trusted them and were connected. I wish Juno had a caring youth pastor that she could have gone to. The only exposure she may have had in the movie to anyone associated with church is an anti-abortion protester. I believe this movie is a reflection of what kids see today.

⁸ *Juno*, Directed by Jason Reitman, 2007; Century City, CA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.

This ministry focus paper will discuss how youth workers can stop following the fads and trends of the last fifteen years and observe the example of Paul and his heart-felt care for his converts on the path to developing a youth work that is healthy and meets the real needs of youth. A specific plan will be developed for The Falls Church to adjust the mindset of youth and challenge adults to go more than halfway in receiving young people into the community of faith. Youth workers, clergy and families will have the opportunity to see some pressure points and if so inclined, to assimilate young people into a healthy, intergenerational church.

The Bible is a book of relationships. Looking at adolescent development, young people discover their identity and grow through the people who relate to them. As children, their parents are the key to determining their self-discovery. As they progress to the teenage years, peers and other adults help them discover their gifts and identity. An intergenerational congregation that welcomes and embraces young people in the life of the church can help these adolescents discover themselves in the life of the church.

If the local church is viewed as a “family,” youth can be seen as the teenagers of that family. Youth have specific needs in a family and specific needs in a church family. If they do not receive the needed attention and direction as teenagers in a family, they will act out, and many times receive attention for negative actions. If the needs of teenagers are not met in the life of a congregation, they will act out by leaving that congregation. The programs of most churches are led and directed by adults, and are usually performed by and for adults. For young people to be ministered to, they must be embraced by the family of God. This is the example in the ministry of Paul in Scripture.

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

SYSTEMIC ABANDONMENT OF ADOLESCENTS

Adolescents are not a tribe apart because they left us, as most people assume. We left them.

- Patricia Hersch, *A Tribe Apart*

There is little or no place for adolescents in American society today - not in our homes, not in our schools, not in society at large . . . In contemporary society, we effectively ignore the unique needs of the age group who are no longer children, yet who have not yet attained full adulthood.

- David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go*

Then some people came to him bringing little children for him to touch. The disciples tried to discourage them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant and told them, 'You must let little children come to me-never stop them!'

- Mark 10:13-14, *The New Testament in Modern English for Schools*,
J. B. Phillips, ed.

It is All About the Adults

In the 2006 New Line Cinema movie titled *Snakes on a Plane*,¹ FBI Agent Neville Flynn (played by Samuel L. Jackson) gives a warning shout to passengers on the Pacific Ocean flight, "There are #@#% snakes on the #@#% plane," producing panic and horror. A cable show picked up on the phrase and related it to the abandonment of

¹ *Snakes on a Plane*, Directed by David R. Ellis and Lex Halaby, 2006; Los Angeles: New Line Cinema.

American youth in affluent communities. As his mother leaves to complete a dangerous illegal drug transaction, Shane Botwin (brilliantly played by actor Alexander Gould in the cable show *Weeds*) addresses his graduating class at Agrestic Elementary School:

Dear Graduates of Agrestic Elementary School Class of 2006, parents, step parents, girlfriends and boyfriends of parents, and assorted friends that our parents call uncles and aunts which really aren't . . . and Principal Dodd. I stand here on the brink of Junior High to say: You have failed us all! Everything is NOT OK! We are alienated, de-sensitized, angry, and frightened. If you picture Agrestic as a plane soaring through the sky, there are #@#% snakes on this #@#% plane! You are not safe. You moved here to feel safe, but your children are not safe . . . Mom, where are you going?²

It is tough for Shane, because his father died about two years ago while jogging alongside him, and his mother has resorted to selling marijuana to continue their upper-middle-class lifestyle in Southern California. Shane has just found out his mother is the local pot dealer in Agrestic, a fictional, planned suburban community. After spending the year watching his mother engage in illegal, dangerous and risky behavior, he finally expresses to any adult that will listen a shout out of the danger, "It is not OK! You want to feel safe, but you are not; I am not safe." The adults in his life, such as Principal Dodd, pass him on to the next level of schooling. Worse, his mother sneaks out of the graduation while he is speaking to deal with a dangerous DEA Agent and finish up a \$300,000 drug deal. As he is escorted off the graduation stage, he cries out, "Mom, where are you going?" The crowd of fifth graders are shouting, "Let him speak, let him speak!"

The award winning writers of this show express a message that is observed by some educators in American culture: the parents of today's youth are so wrapped up in their own needs and issues that they have bypassed the needs and issues of their own

² *Weeds*, Season 2, Episode 12, "Pittsburgh," DVD, Directed by Craig Zisk, 2008; Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate; 2005-2011.

children. The parents have done this while claiming to do everything for their kids, but seem to have lost their way and have de-prioritized the needs of their kids to meet their own needs. These parents have abandoned their children to find their own way.

Questions abound, such as: Has America always abandoned their youth?³ Have adults gotten so wrapped up in their own needs and goals that they skipped or ignored the needs of their most precious responsibility?⁴ How have adults abandoned young people? Why have adults left them to deal with the dangers and confusion of a complicated society on their own? Titles of recent books written by those who have taken significant time to observe adolescents in their own world answer a resounding yes. These books are not just academic studies; many are the results of years of long observations.⁵

The titles declare the message that young people are alone and in need of immediate attention: Chap and Dee Clark's *Hurt and Disconnected*;⁶ Patricia Hersch's *The Tribe Apart*; Madeline Levine's *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*;⁷

³ Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 186.

⁴ Sam Hestorff, *YM2K: Youth Ministry for the Millennial Generation* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 6.

⁵ Hersch, *A Tribe Apart*, 15.

⁶ Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a MySpace World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

⁷ Madeline Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006).

Katherine Newman's *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*;⁸ Donna Gaines' *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids*;⁹ Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson's *America's Teenagers: Motivated but Directionless*.¹⁰ Add these to David Elkind's books, *All Grown up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* and *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*,¹¹ and the theme is pretty clearly noticed. Youth are not connected, but are in fact separated from society. They experience too much pressure. They have been rejected by adults and feel the need to pull away for their own safety and survival. Adults, for the most part, have left them.¹² Adults have abandoned the teenagers they claim to do everything for.¹³

Definition of Abandonment

There are a myriad of definitions for abandonment applicable to adolescents in America. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines abandon as "to hand over, to put in someone's control." It reads: "1 a: to give up to the control or influence of another person or agent, b: to give up with the intent of never again claiming a right or interest in – as in to abandon property; 2: to withdraw from often in the face of danger or encroachment as

⁸ Katherine Newman, Cybelle Fox, Wendy Roth, Jal Mehta and David Harding, *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

⁹ Donna Gaines, *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson, *The Ambitions Generation: America's Teenagers, Motivated but Directionless* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹¹ David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up too Fast Too Soon, 3rd Ed.* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001).

¹² Hersch, *A Tribe Apart*, 14.

¹³ Clark, *Hurt*, 186.

in abandon ship 3: to withdraw protection, support, or help from as in he abandoned his family.”

The synonyms are: forsake – “meaning to leave without intending to return, suggesting an action more likely to bring impoverishment or bereavement to that which is forsaken is exposed to physical dangers;” desert – “implying that the object left may be weakened but not destroyed by one’s absence.” Webster expresses the verb abandon as “to leave completely and finally; forsake utterly; desert little different. To give up; discontinue; withdraw from.” It is a bold statement to say that adults have abandoned their young in America, but it is an accurate one. American adults have left them to resolve their own unmet needs and resolve their own desires.

In a more relational context, Susan Anderson, who writes and speaks on relational abandonment issues in her book, *The Journey from Abandonment to Healing*, answers the question of what abandonment is to the person being abandoned:

What is abandonment? Abandonment is about loss; loss of connectedness, loss of love itself. It results in a woundedness that affects future relationships. Abandonment is a core human fear. It brings up fears of helplessness and loneliness. It results in intense feelings of isolation and aloneness. It strikes at our security in life. When one is abandoned it shatters self esteem. People turn their rage of rejection towards themselves. This abandonment accounts for depression and self injury. Closure is incomplete because the person has not died, but has chosen not to be with you. Rejection, withdrawal-of-love, criticism, and desertion create a devastating personal injury. ‘Being left’ cuts us all the way to the core of our being and self-worth. The pain of abandonment leads some to self medicate with recreational drugs, over eating, shopping, and other self-destructive and self-sabotaging behaviors.¹⁴

According to Anderson, the results of abandoning young people will be deep and lasting. Their relationships will be insecure, filled with fear. The result will be loneliness

¹⁴ Susan Anderson, *The Journey from Abandonment to Healing: Turn the End of a Relationship into the Beginning of a New Life* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2000), 9-10.

in the midst of others and self-blame, which can lead to self-injury. This could explain the wide (and widening) phenomenon of cutting, self-mutilation and extreme piercing that has greatly increased in the last five years. Steven Levenkron, in his book, *Cutting, Understanding and Overcoming Self-Mutilation*, writes of parental abandonment, “Fear of abandonment is the greatest fear a child has. It supersedes the fear of death, which, to a child, is an abstraction at best.”¹⁵ Desire to consume massive amounts of alcohol and other drugs in adolescence could be an attempt to medicate pain over abandonment by adults in their lives. Destructive behavior found in the lives of youth may be a direct result of the abandonment of young people by communities of support. These self-destructive behaviors may be the result of adult abandonment in the lives of a generation of youth who need connection and care to nurture and help them grow.

In the study of recent school shootings, Katherine Newman and her team produced a book titled *Rampage: the Social Roots of School Shootings*. In this study they propose there are five “necessary but not sufficient conditions” for rampage school shootings.¹⁶ Beside gun availability and lack of surveillance cameras, they propose that the “first necessary factor is the shooter’s perception of himself as extremely marginal in the social worlds that matter to him.”¹⁷ When a young person is excluded emotionally, deserted to his or her own world, he or she does not know how to react.

¹⁵ Steven Levenkron, *Cutting: Understanding and Overcoming Self-Mutilation* (New York: Lion's Crown, Ltd., 1998), 32.

¹⁶ Newman, *Rampage*, 230.

¹⁷ Ibid.

As stated previously, abandonment, by definition, is handing over to another agent the control and influence of the one being abandoned. In this context, it is withdrawing support and protection from the child. Withdrawing when problems arise and pulling support at critical times can be devastating to the one being abandoned. When done to young people the results will be incalculable. They are left to deal with the dangerous, poisonous snakes on the plane. They have no one to process the internal and external adolescent changes.

A Brief History of Youth Abandonment in America

The history of youth in the United States seems to indicate an institutional, systemic abandonment of adolescents in America.¹⁸ It seems since the turn of the century, that through the social history of adolescents, young people have been given the message that they are a much lower priority than adults by the society. The message is that adults are in charge and they matter much more.

Institutional Abandonment: “Remember Kids, the World Is for the Adults”

The forms of abandonment have been different in different decades. There has been an extreme fear of youth in the United States since at least the 1920s. The term for this fear or phobia of youth is *ephibiphobia*, from the Greek *ephebe* meaning “young man” and *phobia* meaning “to fear.”¹⁹ Mike Males, the author of books defending youth and their poor perception as a group, has been credited with the term, but it was originally

¹⁸ Hestorff, *YM2K*, 6-11.

¹⁹ Mike A. Males, *The Scapegoat Generation: America's War on Adolescents* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1996), 294.

coined by Kirk Astroth, a 4-H outreach agent from Montana.²⁰ The term is used to describe any loathing, paranoia or fear of young people or the time of life known as youth. This fear of youth has resulted in the perceived need to control them by parents, educators and legislators. Males writes, “Few contemplate just what it means when a society’s most affluent generations of elders choose to enhance our own well-being at the expense of attrition against our young.”²¹ From the factories and farms to the classrooms and the churches, the needs of adolescents seem to have been abandoned by the very people who claim to help them.

In the summer of 1936, at a New York City movie house, Alfred Fondler slapped a teenage girl for talking and disturbing him during a public movie. Alfred had told her to be quiet, and she argued with him. After the slap, the girl pressed charges and the court found in favor of the adult. It was ruled that adults had the right, if not the obligation, to discipline children however they saw fit.²² This teenager found out that movie picture shows are for adults; the right and needs of an adult outweigh the needs of a teenager.

“The World Is for Adults: the Places for Teenagers are Factories, Farms and Mines”

Before the 1930s, teenagers were needed as a workforce in factories, mines and farms. It was not until the Great Depression they were ordered into education, not for their own good, but because there were so few jobs for adults.²³ Before the Great

²⁰ Pauline B. Gough, "Detoxifying Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 81:7 (March 1, 2000): 482.

²¹ Males, *The Scapegoat Generation*, 16.

²² Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 3.

²³ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 45.

Depression, education was mostly handled at home or reserved only for the wealthy. The first public high school opened in Boston in 1821, and almost unbelievably, New York City did not open one until seventy years later.²⁴ Most teenagers were farming, and during most of the nineteenth century more students worked in mines than attended high school.²⁵ This lack of education was not due to the philosophical or religious beliefs of Americans, but due to the economic benefit of a teenage workforce to families. If they could afford to send their children to school, they did not want to pay taxes for public schools and the education of other youth.²⁶

Around the turn of the century, Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association, was known to refer to adolescence with the term “storm and stress.”²⁷ He expressed that the three key issues of adolescence were: 1) conflict with parents; 2) mood disruptions; and 3) risky behavior. Hall attempted to make education more relevant vocationally; his major works were *Adolescence*²⁸ and *Aspects of Child Life and Education*.²⁹

²⁴ Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Perennial, 2000), 141.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 142.

²⁷ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 5.

²⁸ George Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vols. 1 & 2* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1904).

²⁹ George Stanley Hall, *Aspects of Child Life and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1921).

Manly, but not Men

When the concept of “high school” was more accepted by American culture, there was a fear of the feminization of boys.³⁰ Girls were the majority in schools and most of the boys’ teachers were women. There was also concern that immigrants would become stronger than American-born leadership class. Ernest Thompson Seton, a well-known nature writer of the early 1900s, wrote that the typical American youth had once been a respectable farm boy but they had become “flat-chested cigarette smokers with shaky nerves and doubtful vitality.”³¹ Seton was known to have caught some boys vandalizing his home and invited them inside for talks of “the excitement of fighting the Indians.”³²

The answer of potential feminizing of boys from Seton and President Theodore Roosevelt was twofold: 1) physical education; and 2) the Boy Scouts of America. The target was middle-class youth, and the desire was to deal with teens that were not yet adults, though no longer children.³³ It should be noted that Boys Scouts of America and England can be somewhat credited with victory against the Nazis. Hitler youth were taught to follow orders; Boy Scouts were taught to think and act independently. These regimented groups were under high control and kept kids out of trouble.³⁴ This institution may have many good and positive benefits for the individual and community, but with wrong motives it can turn out to be an organization for the adults. Clark writes,

³⁰ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 166-68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

³² *Ibid.*, 167.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 5.

“Organizations, structures, and institutions that were originally concerned with children’s care, welfare, and development have become less interested in individual nurture and developmental concern and more interested in institutional perpetuation.”³⁵

The end of the nineteenth century brought many changes and continued adult control. Job opportunities quickly increased for women as jobs once considered only for men were filled by women (store clerks, type-writers and secretaries). Work done in the homes, like garment work, was now being done for profit in the factories. It is estimated that 60 percent of New York women, ages sixteen to twenty, had paying jobs, and a quarter of all women in America were working for pay by 1910.³⁶

Bringing these young women out in public created a desire for more control. And as the daily hours in the factory went from twelve and fourteen to nine and ten, there was more free time for young people to get into trouble.³⁷ Popular culture at the turn of the century brought questionable dances and romantic movies that challenged the authority of adults, especially within the middle class.³⁸ Adults responded to this new exposure of young women to the job market and social settings with legality. The legal changing of the age of consent may have been a response to the wild movies and outrageous behavior of the day.³⁹ When adults feel they are losing the battle, they legislate.

³⁵ Clark, *Hurt*, 49.

³⁶ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 184.

³⁷ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 182-83.

The perceived need for control occurred strongly in the 1920s. The rise of the flapper and the automobile gave adults more ammunition to demonstrate the need to deal strongly and decisively with youth.⁴⁰ Teenagers and the automobile have been a problem of control since the automobile's invention. The acquisition of a driver's license may be America's strongest rite of passage.⁴¹ By 1929, there was one automobile for every 4.5 Americans.⁴² Allowing a young person to be alone with a member of the opposite sex in an automobile gave it the new title as a "house of prostitution on wheels."⁴³ The older son in the parable of the prodigal accused his little brother similarly with little knowledge of his true behavior. This older brother was not there but assumed the worst.

The word "flappers" had originally been used to refer to a young duck or partridge and then to prostitutes.⁴⁴ Flappers, as a term, had become popular and soon women of all classes were using makeup and dancing with the music of that time, jazz. Prohibition produced many results, one being the glamour of vice. Youth culture became a fascination for many ages. Sexuality was being expressed more publicly, creating more fear for the concerned adults.

⁴⁰ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 101.

⁴¹ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 197.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 195-97.

The World Is for Adults - Even in the Depression

When the Great Depression came upon America, Congress passed laws barring young teens from working and federal regulations made it very difficult for older teenagers to find jobs.⁴⁵ They, along with women and African Americans, were the last to have their needs addressed.⁴⁶ With 25 percent unemployment during the winter of 1932-33 (50 percent unemployment for African-Americans), the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 banned jobs for almost all youth in America.⁴⁷ The relief programs forbid employment of more than one member of a household. The implicit message was the world is for adults, even in a depression. Youth were separated from the economic mainstream. This distinct discrimination against youth and women produced a governmental abandonment of their needs: socially and economically.

Teenagers were bureaucratically abandoned to state-run schools. They had little choice but to go to high school, which was ineffective for many in dealing with them and their specific needs. The policies that were created by government to address the needs of adults greatly hurt those in their teenage years. This time of depression is when high school enrollment affected the majority of teenagers. Hine writes,

The New Deal played a key role in the creation of the teenager. It did so in two ways. First, its policies actively discriminated against young people in the workplace. Later, it created new training and aid programs that dealt with what it defined as youth problems, some of them caused by its own policies . . . Keeping

⁴⁵ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 38.

⁴⁶ Howard Zinn, Mike Konopacki, and Paul Buhle, *A People's History of American Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 144.

⁴⁷ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 38.

young people unproductive was national policy during most of the Depression decade, and it was a surprisingly uncontroversial one.⁴⁸

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt stated, “Youth must be served . . . we shall do something for the nation’s unemployed youth” and launched the creation of the National Youth Administration (NYA) in 1935.⁴⁹ Politicians may say many words, but words are cheap, cheap as teenage labor. It allowed teenagers to work for six dollars a month for twenty hours a week.⁵⁰ In the first two years of F.D. Roosevelt’s administration, 1.5 million youths lost their jobs as a direct result of his administration’s actions.⁵¹ This governmental abandonment is a high form of institutional abandonment. These laws were not to protect youth from being overworked in factories as many think, but to provide more jobs for adults.

More fear of youth can be seen as pre-war adults looked across the ocean. Youth had played a large role in the fascist movement that brought Mussolini into power. The Hitler Youth were estimated at 5.4 million strong and promoted as the new Germany.⁵² In 1935, a journalist named Maxine Davis traveled the country listening to youth. In *The Lost Generation*, she wrote that youth were “unknowing conscripts in an army of outsiders.”⁵³ Davis, like Patrica Hersch (author of *A Tribe Apart*) and Chap Clark (author

⁴⁸ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 204-05.

⁴⁹ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 39.

⁵⁰ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 206.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 207.

⁵³ Maxine Davis, *The Lost Generation: A Portrait of American Youth Today* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1936), 279.

of *Hurt*) took the time to listen to youth, discern and not judge. Those who have listened attentively to youth and their real needs have seen clearly this abandonment and disconnected state of teenagers throughout history. These books describe hurting youth that have formed tribes separate and outside the society.

World War II had older teenagers focused on the military, solving a lot of the control problem for adults. After World War II, teenagers all shared the common experience of high school. Some dropped out of high school to fight the war but most waited until they graduated. For the first time this created an army over eighteen years old. Some desired to fight so much they lied to enlist. Prior to this, American soldiers were as young as thirteen. Although this extension of the military age is a positive trend, the message was also clear that they were less than adults. Years later in 1948, when war broke out in Korea, it was decided to give deferments to those who were college bound.

At this time the term “teenager” was uttered and burned forever in the vocabulary of those concerned with the social ills of America.⁵⁴ “Teenagers” was at first a negative term that reflected one of America’s social problems. Teenagers were viewed not only as a social problem, but an economic opportunity.⁵⁵

Personal income had risen significantly after the war, and a man named Eugene Gilbert monopolized on the youth market. He had five thousand teenage pollsters across America test markets and give feedback on products. He eventually claimed to shape the

⁵⁴ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 225.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 226.

market instead of just reporting on it.⁵⁶ Youth as a market for adult capitalism seems like recent claims of a media company to shape the culture, not just interpret it.⁵⁷ Youth have been viewed as a market to be developed instead of young, needy people to nurture.

After the Second World War, the main concern with youth was juvenile delinquency. The dress of young people that expresses non-conformity always seems to bring out a fear of the status quo. The Zoot Suit Riots of the summer of 1943 in Louisiana brought together two great fears of Americans: teenagers and immigrants.⁵⁸ The loose pants of the “zoot suits” were viewed as clothes to possibly conceal weapons. That summer, hundreds of off-duty soldiers roamed the streets to tear off the zoot suits from mostly ethnic youth. The city council banned zoot suits as a public nuisance, not the violence that was used upon the wearers. Once again legislation was used to solve the problem.⁵⁹ The hood look was responded to in a way similar to the gangsta look today or the hippie look of the late 1960s. There seems to have always been attempts to profile youth as criminals simply because of dress in American history. Understanding the basic need of adolescents to differentiate from adults of the day, instead of fearing them, would be much easier for society and much less costly.

This fear was most likely unfounded. Youth were assumed to be more violent in the 1950s as many experts claimed. In 1953, Fredric Wertham, in his book, *Seduction of*

⁵⁶ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 238.

⁵⁷ Wendell J. Loewen, *Beyond Me: Grounding Youth Ministry in God's Story* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2008), 60-61.

⁵⁸ Palladino, *Teenagers*, 77.

⁵⁹ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 143.

the Innocent, thought youth were out of control and in need of immediate attention and legislation.⁶⁰ He went after comic books as “injury to the eye.”⁶¹ He claimed that youth were worse than ever before and society must recognize it and act. In his testimony before Congress, he claimed Batman and Robin were gay and that Wonder Woman was about bondage and lesbian relationships. In a testimony before Congress, he pointed out subliminal messages in comic books of sexual objects.⁶²

The reaction by adults was censorship. Radio stations and disc jockeys agreed not to play Rhythm and Blues as it was characterized as mixed racial music. The new Comics Code Authority banned the words “crime” and “horror” in comic book titles. William Gaines of E.C. Comics was almost taken out of business, but left with his lone survivor, Mad Magazine.⁶³ All these examples point to the control of young people by adults and marketers instead of attempts to understand their needs.

Interestingly, youth crime rates were going down at this time. Hine writes, “Oddly, both the 1950’s juvenile delinquent and the 1990’s super predator emerged during a time when youth crime figures were low, or even falling.”⁶⁴ Still, if a person went to the movies in the 1950s he or she saw that teenagers were a dangerous group of people. Teenagers were shown as violent, confused and, with very good reason, to be feared. The 1955 movie *Blackboard Jungle* began with a disclaimer that stated, “They

⁶⁰ Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Reinhardt & Co., 1954).

⁶¹ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 144.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶⁴ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 240.

were six years old in the last war. Father in the army, Mother in the defense plant. No home life. No place to go . . . Gang leaders have taken the place of parents.”⁶⁵ This movie made a great deal of money for MGM and featured *Rock Around the Clock* on its soundtrack. Other titles like *Youth Run Wild*, *The Wild One* and *Dragstrip Riot* all made the adolescents of that time out to be very dangerous and to be avoided. In more recent times there have been movies that have portrayed teenage violence, like *The Warriors* and *Colors*. Both were real moneymakers for movie studios that capitalized on the hysteria of the stereotype of gang youth culture. A small percentage of youth were in gangs, but these movies made it look like every teenager in New York and Los Angeles were active, violent gang members. Representing youth as wild and out of control got more attention and publicity as well as sold more movie tickets.

I was working as a youth pastor in 1988 with some gang members and former gang members in Hollywood, California when the movie *Colors* came out.⁶⁶ I went with a couple that had some association with gangs to see the movie. Although true gang life was violent, they felt that it was “Hollywoodized” and laughed about how certain aspects of gang life were displayed. The movement from one area of the city like Compton to Venice Beach was completely unrealistic. After personally experiencing some brutal actions from police, their main observation was that the police in the movie were more honest and upright than the Hollywood police had been to them. There was one time I had to run out from Sunday school to prove to police that these gang members (or former gang members) were on their way to church. They had them down on their knees with

⁶⁵ *Blackboard Jungle*, Directed by Richard Brooks, 1955; Los Angeles: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

⁶⁶ *Colors*. Direct by Dennis Hopper. 1988; Los Angeles: Orion Pictures.

their hands behind their heads until I got there. I had to stay with them to help them cross Hollywood Boulevard while two officers looked on. The point is the movie was made to entertain and sell tickets, not to show true gang life. The earlier movie, *The Warriors*, was to sensationalize the idea of gangs with representations of rallies in Central Park, and almost comical gangs of youth with baseball bats and unusual uniforms, painted faces, and roller skates.⁶⁷ It seemed to be representing and stereotyping youth as dangerous just to sell tickets (mostly to youth).

One of the fears of many adults was that lower-class youth and immigrants would have negative influences on the middle class. The hero (or anti-hero) of J. D. Salinger's 1951 novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, showed teenage angst and real life alienation that contributed to many adults' perception of teenagers as wild rebels.⁶⁸ Hines writes, "The purpose of high school was largely to indoctrinate youth with middle class standards. But by segregating young people with many others their own age, universal high school education gave teenagers the chance to set standards of their own."⁶⁹

This concern that youth are getting much worse than the previous generation is debunked by Males in his book, *Framing Youth*. He writes, "As a group, today's American youth are less criminal than those of the 1970s or 1980s. The decline in serious youth crime has occurred while major crime among their parents, the 30-40-agers, has risen sharply. By a wide variety of measures, kids today act more maturely than kids of

⁶⁷ *The Warriors*. Directed by Walter Hill. 1979; Los Angeles, Paramount Pictures.

⁶⁸ J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (Boston: Little Brown, 1951).

⁶⁹ Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 243.

the past and more responsibly than adults today.”⁷⁰ He presents chart after chart of statistics regarding the positive progression of behavior of this recent generation.

In the 1970s, Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University researched human development and studied the effect the school system was having on young people in the decades of the 1960s and early 1970s. He wrote in 1974 that over the past two decades, the school had become “one of the most potent breeding grounds of alienation in American society . . . [It] reflects a breakdown of the inter-connections between the various segments of the child’s life—family, school, peer group, neighborhood, and the beckoning, or all too often indifferent or rejecting, world of work.”⁷¹

Youth were the dominant culture in the 1960s, or maybe more correctly put “sub-culture” of youth. It was a period of turbulence politically, socially, economically and spiritually. Social unrest contributed to the generation gap. What seemed to be outrageous styles of dress, differences regarding the conflict in Vietnam and race relations, recreational drug use and relaxed sexual values widened this gap. This generation gap created even more distance and distrust between young people and adults. “Don’t trust anyone over thirty,” was a motto for the new generation, who felt the war and proliferation of nuclear weapons was out of control. “Make Love, not War,” was another motto that offended the over-thirty crowd. Institutions reacted with laws and other attempts to control. Again, the world is for adults, and teenagers need to be disciplined and controlled.

⁷⁰ Mike A. Males, *Framing Youth: Ten Myths about the Next Generation* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1998), 4.

⁷¹ Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design, 2nd ed.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 231.

In 1963, a principal of University High School in Southern California told parents to pick up their children. The Cuban Missile Crisis was at hand and he did not want the students bombed and blasted at his school. The end of the world was not to happen on school property.⁷² It was possible to help these high school students process the fears of this insane situation of possible disintegration and possible extinction. Moving the youth off school property was a form of abandonment right at their most serious point of need. It was possible teenagers were more confused and concerned about this potential nuclear war than adults in charge. Adults tend to push youth away. Just like principal Dodd said to Shane Botwin of *Weeds*, “You have graduated from elementary school; you are now the problem of the Junior High. Please leave.”

If the history of teenagers in the United States before the 1960s set up a culture of abandonment, then the 1960s continued it. The uncertainties of the time drove this gap of the generations wider. Adolescents felt misunderstood, and adults continued to separate from their own young people. The hair styles, dress, drug use, protests, civil rights, the music, questioning of values, explicit language and the attitudes about the war were pretty good excuses for continued *ephebiphobia*. The terrible assassinations of the liberal leaders, John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as other Civil Rights leaders added to the confusion of American society to the young.

The development and promotion of the birth control pill along with the preaching of a philosophy and lifestyle of casual sex by *Playboy Magazine* founder Hugh Hefner

⁷² Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 251.

confounded the values of middle-class parents.⁷³ The availability of mind-altering drugs like LSD and Timothy Leary's encouragement to "Turn on, tune in, drop out" turned many suburban youth into outlaws, where in the recent past drug use had been pretty much reserved for the urban poor.⁷⁴ The overreaction to experimentation and ignorant classifications characterizing all drugs together added to an extreme separation from youth as drug-users.⁷⁵ The division in regards to attitudes of the conflict in Vietnam created a clear choice as to whether a person was a "hawk" (pro-military) or a "dove" (pro-peace). Put all these issues together and there were a number of strong excuses to give up on the other generation. Fathers of the children of the sixties cried, "These hippie kids are impossible;" while teenagers screamed, "My father will never understand!"

The next decade saw atrocities in an undeclared (and seemingly unwinnable) Vietnam conflict and resignation of an unpopular, conservative president (elected in a landslide popular vote less than two years before).⁷⁶ Americans could not handle losing thousands of young men who wanted to contain Communism. Witnessing a president lie to the American people and hearing recordings of the inner workings of the Nixon Oval Office were shocking to most. They even had the arrogant pride to record and tape it.⁷⁷

⁷³ Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008), 39.

⁷⁴ Timothy Leary, *Flashbacks: An Autobiography* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1983), 45.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁷⁶ Barry Werth, *31 Days: Gerald Ford, the Nixon Pardon, and a Government in Crisis* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 71-72.

⁷⁷ Stanley I. Kutler and Richard M. Nixon, *Abuse of Power: The New Nixon Tapes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 1.

These tapes were transcribed and printed in the local newspapers. The attitudes and insecurities (as well as the curses) of the highest elected official were out for all to see.

The foundations of trust were forever broken for generations. The bumper sticker “Question Authority” represented a new mood and tone in society that expressed the hurt and disillusionment felt by almost all in the United States. This unrest in America produced tremendous insecurity to an American people, who were unrealistic in foreign engagements and prided themselves in their elected political leaders. America had never lost a war, and elected leaders in a clean, democratic fashion. Leaders were a representation of the electorate and Americans did not like what they saw. America was going through a very transforming time and youth were affected.

CHAPTER 2

CONSEQUENCES OF ABANDONMENT IN SOCIETAL SETTINGS

The Extension of Adolescence

The word for adolescent comes from the Latin word, *adolescere*, which means, “to grow.”¹ Kenda Creasy Dean of Princeton Theological Seminary writes, “The term adolescent refers to young people who are engaged in various psychosocial tasks associated with the formation of their identity.”² She describes early adolescence as ages ten to fourteen; middle adolescence as fourteen to eighteen. Recently, late adolescence/young adulthood is described as eighteen to thirty. The term “youth” used in Dean’s book means roughly the same as adolescent.

Adolescence is a period in which young people engage in a psychosocial, independent search for a unique identity or separateness. The goal of this search according to Clark is certain knowledge of which, one is in relation to others; a willingness to take responsibility for who is becoming; and a realized commitment to live

¹ Chap Clark, “Youth Ministry in an Age of Delayed Adulthood,” *Fuller Youth Institute* (September 7, 2005), <http://fulleryouthinstitute.org/2005/09/youth-ministry-in-an-age-of-delayed-adulthood/trackback/> (accessed January 26, 2011).

² Kenda Creasy Dean, *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 2.

with others in community.³ The definition of adolescence is realization of identity, autonomy and belonging or community.⁴

Identity is the main emphasis in Erik Erikson's work on youth, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. "Search for identity" is almost the definition of adolescence for Erickson, who did much of his study with the Sioux Indians.⁵ He taught that the path of human development is determined by the intersection of the body, mind and culture.⁶ He organized life into eight different stages, from birth to death. For Erikson, ages six to twelve are characterized as school age and ages twelve to eighteen are adolescence. Adolescence is mainly concerned with identity as opposed to "identity confusion."⁷ Childhood development is what is done to someone, while in adolescence, development depends on what the person does. Adolescents' tasks are to discover who they are, as separate from family, and as members of wider society. Identity confusion is the result of adolescents having trouble navigating this stage. Erikson illustrates identity confusion by pointing to the character Biff in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, when he exclaims to his mother that he "just can't get hold of some kind of life."⁸

In the past few years there have been many theories as to what happens in youth personal development. The "emerging adulthood theory" is a new stage of development

³ Chap Clark and Steve Rabey, *When Kids Hurt: Help for Adults Navigating the Adolescent Maze* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2009), 19-20.

⁴ Loewen, *Beyond Me*, 64.

⁵ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), 163-65.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁸ *Ibid.*

that has recently been embraced.⁹ The guru of the emerging adulthood theory is Jeffery Arnett, a professor in the Department of Human Development at The University of Maryland. The Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood (SSEA) was founded in 2003, and chaired by Arnett. Arnett theorizes that there is now a distinct stage of life between the teenager and the adult, coined by him, the emerging adult.¹⁰ Arnett has named and promoted this new stage of life almost single-handedly. Christian Smith and Patricia Snell's *Souls in Transition: The Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, which is a study of the spiritual lives of emerging adults, is the only other book to even use this term. After reading several books by Arnett on emerging adulthood, Smith and Snell enthusiastically accept the theory and comments on this new period of life: "A new, distinct, and important stage in life, situated between the teenage years and full-fledged adulthood has emerged in our culture in recent decades- reshaping the meaning of self, youth, relationships, and life commitments as well as a variety of behaviors and dispositions among the young."¹¹

Arnett states that three factors have created a new stage of life, beginning in the late teens and running through the mid-to-late twenties: the upward rise in age of a young person beginning to marry and parent, the extension of higher education and the instability and lengthening of job opportunities during the twenties. This is not just an extension of adolescence, Arnett claims, but a period of "independent exploration" and

⁹ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, (Washington, DC: American Psychological Assoc., 2006), 8-11.

¹¹ Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6.

more freedom from parental control.¹² As it is “not extended adolescence, it is also, not ‘young adulthood,’ since this term implies that an early stage of adulthood has been reached, whereas most young people in their twenties have not made the transitions historically associated with adult status - especially marriage and parenthood - many of them feel they have not yet reached adulthood.”¹³

Arnett’s books spend a great deal of time describing and defending why it is a new stage. He claims one reason for the new stage is the rise in age of marriage. Rise in the age of marriage could be a symptom of immaturity in relationships. Recognizing that causality is difficult to prove, Arnett points out that the sexual revolution (coupled with the development and promotion of the birth control pill) hindered or crippled male-female intimacy and prolonged immature social relationships.¹⁴ Healthy aspects of some forms of dating have all but disappeared and numerous people in their twenties have hardly experienced positive intimate male-female relationships. This could be a symptom of extended adolescence instead of the cause of a new life-stage in America.

Arnett believes the beginning of this new stage has changed the way America works vocationally. He writes, “The rise of emerging adulthood has changed the nature of work for young people in their late teens and early twenties.”¹⁵ It could be the other way around. It could be that the change in the nature of work has given rise to extended

¹² Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 8-11.

¹³ Arnett, *Emerging Adults in America*, 4.

¹⁴ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 5.

¹⁵ Arnett, *Emerging Adults in America*, 144.

adolescence. Parents of these “super kids” may not really want their boys and girls even at age twenty-three, to move on in a healthy, independent way.¹⁶

This is not a popular view, but one that should be examined. It may be that Baby Boomer parents have hindered the healthy growth of their children by being over-involved in their lives. This lack of independence may have removed the responsibility from children to receive consequences of their choices, creating individuals who extend the period of adolescence or even childhood. I continually run into people in their mid-twenties who seem unable to cope with normal life challenges without calling their parents. Some parents are over a thousand miles away and are called to help change a tire or help with a credit card charge.

James Côté addresses this delayed on set of adulthood in a different way than Arnett does in his books.¹⁷ He did this before the term “emerging” was ever in print. His thesis is that material conditions of existence have been constantly changing as capitalism has expanded, creating positive and negative results. Positive results are better food and nutrition, a much higher standard of living, a longer life span and more personal freedom. Negative results include loss of structure and direction that defined maturity as well as identity and “a widespread psychological malaise for those people who have not been able to ‘capitalize’ on the socioeconomic changes affecting the course of their lives, especially those that give them greater personal freedom.”¹⁸ Côté writes that in this complicated world, the transition to adulthood has become longer and more difficult, and

¹⁶ Elkind, *The Hurried Child*, ix-x.

¹⁷ James E. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 3-4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

those who try to move into what he calls “psychological adulthood” find themselves in a new stage of what he calls “youthhood.” Youthhood is misunderstood by many as adulthood; when it is really another stage.¹⁹ The term youthhood seems to look back, instead of ahead.

Both Arnett and Côté have written extensively; Côté wrote first, but Arnett got better press and wrote many more books. Côté also co-wrote *Generation on Hold: Coming of Age in the Late Twentieth Century* in 1994, when Arnett was still thinking and writing about Metal Heads.²⁰ Regardless, there is some sort of extension of adolescence. This leads to a question of whether adulthood is determined by marriage and parenthood or by development of certain areas of growth. Clark writes that the areas are: autonomy (“I am willing to take responsibility for myself”), identity (“I know who I am and am fairly comfortable with who I am”), and belonging (“I have relationships and a community that I receive from and sacrifice for”).²¹ Clark writes,

Throughout history children were trained in rites of passage preparing them for adulthood, and they experienced rituals that clearly marked their entrance into adulthood . . . The problem is that when a culture lacks rites of passage designed to prepare and train young people for adulthood (like ours), and then removes almost every definable ritual signpost for the childhood to adulthood (like ours), it’s very difficult to agree on when adolescence ends and adulthood begins.²²

Culture is not clearly saying when a teenager becomes an adult. In the early 1900s people were ready to be independent at a much earlier age. There was a desire to be an adult.

¹⁹ Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 4.

²⁰ James E. Côté and Anton L. Allahar, *Generation on Hold: Coming of Age in the Late Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994).

²¹ Clark, “Youth Ministry in an Age of Delayed Adulthood.”

²² Ibid.

Now there seems to be a desire to be a kid, even at thirty. The expectations of what an adult was were pretty clearly laid out in the early 1900s, and handed down by parents and the community. That is not the case now. The systemic abandonment of youth may have contributed to the extension of adolescence.

Parents and Systemic Abandonment of Our Young

Clark writes about this transformation affecting our society:

Until the 1960s, many adults and their institutions had focused on caring for young people through such efforts as youth sports, religious training, and outdoor activities. But as we emerged from the 1960s, many adults began trying to find a safe place or haven of security and rest for themselves. As adults waged a fight for their own emotional and relational survival, children got the time and attention that was left over, which was not much. As a result our society was transformed.²³

Clark is saying that the children of the 1960s and 1970s became parents in the 1980s and 1990s. Due to the extreme unrest and complexities of their childhood, many never fully resolved their own personal issues and deep emotional needs. This had dramatic effects on them as children and the way they raised their own children. In many ways they emotionally abandoned (ignored, delegated, used) them. There is a cost from this unrest, and today's teenagers are paying it.

As many of the children of the 1960s and 1970s attempt to attend their own needs, their children have been delegated off to public or private schools, sports teams, church groups, summer camps, skill based lessons (computer, tutoring, music, hobbies, service organizations, paying jobs, internships, etc.) and other "positive and healthy" events and experiences. These new parents, many of whom are single, have prioritized their lives to

²³ Clark and Rabey, *When Kids Hurt*, 22.

cover the bases with their children in order to be good or excellent parents, yet have deep needs that are not being met sufficiently.²⁴

Some of them attempt to fill those needs by being good parents, thereby using their own children as their outlet and status. Good parents have good students, good athletes, good Christian kids, good musicians or all-around good kids. So the success of parenting is tied directly to the performance of their children in those areas. The danger is this: the performance-based goal is the perceived evaluation of how they are doing as parents. The successful performance of mom and dad is tied directly to the success or failure of the performance of their children. This is played out in the classroom, the sports field, the church youth group; even raising children is about adults.

Adults have shifted from working to meet the needs of their children, to seeing their own needs being met in their relationship and the social status of their children. In an attempt to be an excellent parent, the child can be injured and hurt developmentally in emotional and social ways. As said previously, the pressure placed on the child to perform is many times directly tied to the parents' unmet need to succeed.

Elkind, a recognized authority on adolescent development and Professor of Child Development at Tufts University, has written several books that address this in a fascinating way. His books, *The Ties that Stress* and *The Hurried Child*, express great concern for the pressure and unreasonable drive adults have had to develop success in children before they are ready. He writes of the recent shift from the needs of children to the needs of the parent:

²⁴ Hestorff, *Ym2k*, 4.

In the modern nuclear family these binding sentiments were largely child-centered in the sense that they gave preference to the well-being of children and required self-sacrifice of parents. In the post-modern permeable family, however, the sentimental ties have been transformed and are now more likely to be adult-centered to the extent that they favor the well being of parents and adults and require self-sacrifice from the young.²⁵

Clark writes, “The culture itself is no longer attentive to the needs of children and adolescents as it once was, and therefore, the young work hard at finding out how to make it on their own.”²⁶

Clark and Elkind have expressed this deep concern clearly: life has become about the adults. Even if one were to question the history of how it got to this, few seem to question that it is. The needs of youth are being subrogated to the needs and wants of present-day adults. Those who disagree may be in personal denial, as it is hard to admit that attempts to be good parents may be for their own needs more than for children. Motives may be difficult (if not impossible) to discern, but actions within the Church are to be evaluated in relation to ministry and developing young people.

Helicopter Parents to Snow-Plow Parents

Hara Estroff Marano has written *A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting*. Although she makes a lot of sensational claims that are not all fully backed, she makes some great observations about the state of parenting in America. She writes of a new parenting picture that is a few steps beyond the hovering helicopter parents, the picture of “the snow plow parents.” These “snow plow parents are responsible for

²⁵ David Elkind, *Ties That Stress: The New Family Imbalance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 38.

²⁶ Clark and Rabey, *When Kids Hurt*, 42.

creating the ‘Fragility Factor.’”²⁷ Whereas helicopter parents hinder their children’s growth by hovering and watching over their children closely, snow-plow parents greatly stunt their children’s lives by pushing all obstacles out of their child’s way to attempt to provide a good, successful life. This parental removal of all bumps and discomforts from their children creates a frailty developmentally in the children. Marano says that with few challenges of their own they are becoming weaker in dealing with the normal issues of life. She sees the removal of play in the playground, constant use of cell phones to call parents (even throughout college), sanitized gels, accommodations for testing for many in schools, grade inflation and just plain parental protection are resulting in more mental issues in America’s young.²⁸ Children are supposed to get scraped knees and hurt feelings, without parents immediately rushing to the rescue.

Parental hovering and plowing out challenges can be a form of abandonment and control, as they attempt to be good parents outwardly, yet obsess in the care of their children to supply their own parental needs. Maybe it is oversimplification, but some parents need their kids to fulfill themselves. Sadly, some actually need their children to do well in sports, academics and music in order to create worth in themselves as parents.

Youth have real needs. When adults pursue their own needs in relationship with their children, they can be blind to the needs of their children in this complicated world. Adults need to determine and discern the real needs of youth today.

²⁷ Hara Estroff Marano, *A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008), 117.

²⁸ Ibid.

A Filter of Needs

Luke 2:52 is the only verse in the Bible that describes Jesus in the years after age twelve and before the age of thirty. Luke states, “And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” This is the only verse in regards to Jesus in his teenage years. This verse is similar to 1 Samuel 2:26 describing the prophet Samuel. John Nolland, in *The Word Biblical Commentary on Luke*, writes,

Traditional theology has stumbled here at what might be taken to undermine the conviction that Jesus was at all times and in all respects utterly without flaw. Luke speaks, rather, out of the conviction that the human maturing process even in perfect form involves not only growth in size but also development in wisdom and in the capacity to execute that which is pleasing both to God and to one’s fellows.²⁹

This verse describes four areas: wisdom (the mental area); stature (the physical area); favor with God (the spiritual area); and favor with man (the social area). Recently, Jim Loehr published a work where he assesses these areas and adds the emotional area.³⁰ Loehr believes strength comes from balance in these five areas. Many others say these five areas are the basics of the balanced life. They are helpful as a filter to process and evaluate how to discern and meet needs.

Lois Le Bar, Professor of Christian Education and Chairman of the Graduate Department of Wheaton College in the late 1960, was a foundational teacher in the process of discerning needs for teaching in Christian Education. Le Bar writes that discerning real needs as opposed to felt needs can be difficult. She lists these five areas as

²⁹ John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20, vol. 35A, Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 133.

³⁰ James E. Loehr and Tony Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 9-11.

a way to assess group and individual needs.³¹ When looking at each of these areas, it may be seen specifically how adults and leadership (secular and spiritual) have missed or dismissed these needs for adults needs.

The Mental Area of Abandonment: Education of the Child Is for the Adults

One of the first areas adults have missed the mark in caring for young people is in the area of academics and education. Elkind in his excellent work *Miseducation* writes that well-meaning parents rush the task of educating their children, especially pre-school children, to read, compute and do math problems before they are ready. He claims the attempt to push a child into being a “super-kid” creates developmental injury and affects their normal learning patterns.³² Parents and educators who desire to see children and youth excel before their time may think it is best for the future of their child, but it will most likely backfire and could stunt their growth.³³ Elkind writes of the “super-kid” parents are trying to raise; his observations reek of deep concern of the consequences of single-parenting, blended families and two-parent working home life:

Many parents who are living the new lifestyles still remain invested in the traditional values of parental nurturing. Those values asserted that one parent needed to be home with the children when they were young if the children were to realize their full intellectual, personal, and social potential. Thus, many contemporary parents feel residual guilt about placing their children in the care of others during the early years. The conception of children as competent to deal with, and indeed benefiting from, everything and anything that life has to offer was an effective rationalization for parents who continue to love their children but who have neither the time, not the energy, for childhood. Our contemporary

³¹ LeBar, *Focus on People in Church Education*, 30-31.

³² David Elkind, *Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 202.

³³ Ibid.

conception of Superkid, then, competent to deal with all of life's vicissitudes, must be seen as social invention to alleviate parental anxiety and guilt.³⁴

Miseducation was published in 1987, and includes a section titled "Questions Parents Ask." Elkind was asked what was going to happen to all these kids that have been pushed academically and mentally before they were ready. He responded that he could not be sure; however, "my guess is that teenagers of the nineties will be more neurotic than teenagers today. They will show more obsessions, more compulsions, more phobias, more psychosomatic symptoms than do teenagers today . . . what I cannot really predict is the extent of the problem."³⁵

An eleventh grade student called me for an emergency meeting last spring. He had a serious counseling need and had to see me on my day off. Thinking the worst, I met him as soon as possible. He explained with urgency that he wanted to take five college level classes his senior year; but his school counselor wanted him to take three and would approve no more than four. He was devastated and expressed his academic future was finished. The desire to excel academically can hinder the growth of other areas of life.

The Washington DC area produces a work ethic that is unhealthy for most, and overflows to area youth. The student mentioned is not the exception, but very common in the Northern Virginia-area. Learning is not the priority; making the perfect grade is. Students must get all A's to get into the schools they count on, so a B is unacceptable.

³⁴ Elkind, *Miseducation*, 202.

³⁵ Ibid.

Madeline Levine writes of “maladaptive perfectionism.”³⁶ It is defined as perfectionism that impairs regular functioning. It concerns the child who cannot sleep, throws up before school or feigns illness because of anxiety or worry about an assignment.³⁷ In her school district, grades are available at all times in a program called *PowerSchool*. Levine says constant monitoring of grades does not encourage a “real love for learning.”³⁸ She writes, “When parents place an excessively high value on outstanding performance, children come to see anything less than perfect as failure.”³⁹ She notes there is a strong relationship between perfectionism and suicide in gifted adolescents, as adolescent suicide is often precipitated by failure or perceived failure.⁴⁰

Teenagers presently are very ambitious and may have their expectations way too high. In the late 1990s, Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson pointed out: “As a generation, today’s adolescents desire to be professional in numbers far greater than the number of jobs projected for professionals in 2005. Six times more adolescents want to be doctors and five times more want to be lawyers than there are projected to be openings in these professions.”⁴¹ This unmet expectation of being a doctor or lawyer could be a major let down to a generation that is under way too much pressure. They are not learning the skills to deal with letdowns like this.

³⁶ Madeline Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids* (New York: Harper, 2008), 180.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Barbara L. Schneider and David Stevenson, *The Ambitious Generation: America's Teenagers, Motivated but Directionless* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 6.

Instead of developing skills to deal with failure, many adults have attempted to build them up with inflated self-esteem. Levine writes of self-esteem,

Its extensive and undeserved run in this country . . . in spite of refrigerator doors covered in badges and ribbons, and gold stars awarded for even the slightest effort, kids today are not only not better adjusted than they were thirty or forty years ago, they are in fact more emotionally troubled and less academically successful by most measures . . . Children need a realistic view of self, not an inflated sense of self. Indiscriminant praise makes it hard for children to evaluate themselves realistically . . . The truth is we often praise as much to bolster our own needs as to bolster the needs of our children.⁴²

Levine goes on to say that praising youth for grades may communicate that their worth is tied up in the grade. If a mother was to say, “I’m so proud of you for getting an A on that math test,” she may be communicating that she is less proud of them for the B on the spelling test, which may represent a greater effort and higher learning curve. This communicates love and acceptance on a conditional basis and does not take into account the most important aspect of learning: improving and effort.

Levine’s point that building up kids for parents’ own self-esteem needs should not be missed. In the insecure world of the children of the 1960s and 1970s, parents poured on praise of their own children to build themselves up. The push for “super-kids” and accomplishments in academics seems a desire to meet needs in the parents rather than the child. Once again, school could even be all about the adults.

The drive for academic achievement has actually hindered learning in many cases in high school. When top ranked students must get all A’s to get into top ranked schools, it gives little option to try out other subjects. They learn to be good students. This may or may not mean that the student is learning.

⁴² Levine, *The Price of Privilege*, 141-42.

Clark, who studied youth in their natural habitat (the local high school), confirms that kids today care more about grades and not necessarily learning.⁴³ He writes, “Many students had learned at an early age how to ‘play to’ the expectations of the system, yet doing so separated them from the authentic engagement with that very system and its reason for being.”⁴⁴ This also includes cheating, which Clark says most kids do. Cheating is so widespread on high school campuses that recently one eleventh grade student told me it is considered by many to be the norm. Denise Clark Pope writes, “Instead of fostering in its students traits of honesty, integrity, cooperation and respect, the school may be promoting deception, hostility, and anxiety.”⁴⁵ The primary reason given by students for cheating is the claim that teachers are unjust.⁴⁶

Teachers are a major area of concern in mental growth for teenagers. Though teachers are important to society they are often mistrusted and not paid well. Teachers may categorize students with snap judgments.⁴⁷ They receive an impression or report of a student and at times pigeonhole that student. Many teachers seem over-stressed and underappreciated. They may not be supported by parents or administration, and, with large student-teacher ratios there is a good chance of categorizing in order to deal with it.

Teachers can be beaten down and their creativity and enthusiasm diminished. When a college student decides to major in education, to begin teaching at any level, he

⁴³ Clark, *Hurt*, 86.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴⁵ Denise Clark Pope, *Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 159.

⁴⁶ Clark, *Hurt*, 88.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

or she cannot have thought about being disrespected by parents, administrators, boards and students alike. They never think the exciting plans they have to teach and change lives will be controlled by standardized curriculums and school boards that undercut their creativity. Elkind writes,

Our schools today suffer from the same structural problems that made our industries an easy mark for foreign competition. School systems are often top-heavy with administratively and excessively hierarchical and authoritarian. The creativity and innovation of teachers is deadened by overly close ties to the uniformity of educational publishing and testing. Finally, effective change in education is often blocked by school boards whose decisions may be dictated more by concerns of personality and politics than by those that are properly pedagogical.⁴⁸

It seems that the fictional character, Shane Botwin of Agrestic Elementary School is right. It is as if he is saying, “It is not OK, all adults have failed us and there are snakes on the plane. They are loose and dangerous on the plane of education.” The very system that is to develop young people may be injuring them in the area of learning. Parents along with the school system have a system that has driven youth to play the game and survive, even if it involves cheating. Learning institutions are not teaching them to learn, but to barely survive the years of adolescence.

No Longer Fun: Youth Sports Are for the Adults

Kids now have a hard time playing neighborhood pick-up games. Barbara Carlston, president and co-founder of Putting Families First, says they do not have them much. She says, “They’ve been told by their coaches where on the field to stand, told by their parents what socks to wear, told by the referees who’s won and what’s fair. Kids are

⁴⁸ Elkind, *The Hurried Child*, 51.

losing leadership skills.”⁴⁹ Over forty thousand U.S. schools no longer have recess.⁵⁰ The organized sports that many kids play are organized and managed by adults and if any problems come up are quickly solved by adult referees.

Sports for youth are now sports for adults. Just as school is for the grades, sports are played for the score. For far too many, the goal of high school sports has become an application builder for admission to competitive colleges. George Mason High School, in Falls Church, was recently named *Sports Illustrated*'s number one athletic school in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Some parents pay 11,000 dollars a year to let their high school child attend this public school. If they happen to reside a few blocks outside the City of Falls Church, they would have to go to lower-ranked schools in Fairfax, so an arrangement is made that families can pay tuition for the better education to attend this public school. Parents want their money's worth, so the coaches are the best in the DC-area. One girl who just graduated said, “Soccer, lacrosse, track used to be fun, but the pressure from coaches to win and be the best makes me crazy. I will not be playing in college and may never play again.” This is not an isolated comment.

Coaches are rewarded for good records and championships, and the kids are the path to that reward. Many were accomplished athletes and want their teams to be accomplished. They grew up that way, so they bring their students up that way. Parents are thrilled their children are committed to something that supposedly keeps them away from drugs and other potentially destructive behavior. Coaches fulfill their dream of championships, using their teams of kids to get there, and mom and dad are socially

⁴⁹ Marano, *A Nation of Wimps*, 117.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

connected to a community of parents who identify themselves as supportive. The competition is high. In order to be on many of those teams, players must give up a great deal of other activities, like church and jobs. Coaches, who exhibit a win-at-all-cost attitude, do not have a sense of priorities in regards to family or spiritual life. Youth are manipulated and shunned when they miss a practice or called sporting event by coaches, even to attend church. Some require proof of year-round dedication and spend a much greater proportion of time practicing rather than playing their games.

Those who play well get the time, and those who are average stop playing, usually freshman year. “I wanted to try hurdles, but the coach only wanted people that were good. I might have been good, but she didn’t give me a chance,” said an eleventh grade student in Northern Virginia. “Our school is for stars, and if you are not a star, sorry, you can’t even try.” Clark writes,

The competitive world of student sports is perhaps the most obvious arena in which abandonment has made its mark on the adolescent psyche. We still use the rhetoric that youth sports build character, yet, in reality, often what we have taught our children builds nothing other than arrogance, self-centeredness, and performance ethic that is destructive to healthy, communally connected development.⁵¹

Consumer Culture: Consumerism and the Adolescent Narrative

When young people are developing their identity, suggesting that personal acquisition is a way to happiness can be enticing. Fulfillment and some form of meaning in life is a strong temptation in consumer culture. Attractive and seductive advertisements are produced to create a sense of need that can produce insecurity about what people are without this or that product. When ads are produced to specifically target adolescences,

⁵¹ Clark, *Hurt*, 113.

they address a perceived gap in the lives of teenagers. Wendell Loewen addresses this in a most fascinating way in his recent book on youth work, *Beyond Me: Grounding Youth Ministry in God's Story*. This book discusses the abuse and manipulation encountered daily by young people from consumer culture. He writes that certain shows on television tell us “you can be saved from a life of insignificance and despair. When you find yourself in a struggle for happiness, dissatisfied with life and who you are, your search will ultimately lead you to a purchase.”⁵²

This deals directly with salvation of the soul; as our Lord said humanity cannot serve God and money. Desire for possessions can easily become idols, and the spiritual life is distracted away from the Lord with games, dolls, collections, clothes, cars and the like. Loewen describes a marketing strategy called “caricaturing” that designs a form of adolescent identity for teens to accept and adopt: the “Mook” (male identity) and the “Midriff” (female identity). The Mook is a character demonstrating crude, loud and obnoxious behavior, permanently stuck in adolescence. The Midriff is very different. She is a sexually empowered, prematurely adult girl who flaunts sexuality. Characters like these are used in advertisements, with the desired effect to have adolescents identify with them. The marketing plan is to associate products with these identities.⁵³

For young people struggling with identity issues, to be constantly exposed to multi-million dollar images with strong messages has a powerful influence. When advertisements communicate that teenagers are less than they could be without a product, their development of identity may be affected. Thousands of images almost daily create

⁵² Loewen, *Beyond Me*, 60-66.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 64-66.

an unhealthy environment for youth. These “masters of manipulation” are preying on young for profit and have little motivation to stop or be evaluated.⁵⁴ With the freedoms of culture, the only way to deal with this abuse is to prepare youth to discern manipulative tactics and confront the lies (hidden or outright).

If a businessperson is interested in maximizing his or her profit from the four-to-twelve-year-old target market, James McNeal’s, *Kids as Customers: A Handbook of Marketing to Children*, would be an excellent resource. This book addresses how to sell items to children (like comic books and plastic toys). McNeal writes, “Needs are not for products, products are for needs.”⁵⁵ Children are a target market to be maximized, not young lives to be developed by consumer culture. This is partly why mid-adolescents express their situation in words such as “abused, manipulated, and used.”⁵⁶ No one seems to look out for the youth, not even the Church.

Social Settings and the Church

Not only is the world for adults, but the Church in America is for adults. Adults direct and control every single aspect of it. They control the decision-making, the budget, the planning and the program. They may give the youth a room, a staff, some youth worship services and a budget, but adults are the ones giving it to them.

The worship service is for adults. When the pastor or pastors plan a worship service, they think of the adults and their worship, not the entire family. They may try to

⁵⁴ James U. McNeal, *Kids as Customers: A Handbook of Marketing to Children* (Lexington, KY: Lexington Books, 1992), 189.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Disconnected*, 138.

include young people, but the bottom line, the ones they must listen to, in order and style, is the adults. Clergy and senior pastors would be hurt and defensive to hear this, but it is true. Sometimes the best hope is for is a shout-out to teenagers, or a comment in the middle of a sermon such as, “this is especially relevant to you, young people.”

There seems to be three basic aspects to the program of the worship service that determine the receptivity of the people in a certain age group: the music, the leadership and the preaching. It’s difficult to grasp but, the music is for adults, the leadership is almost exclusively adult and the preaching is for adults. Music in most worship services is geared for the above-twenty crowd, even in a contemporary, young-leaning service. Contemporary worship may have drums and guitars, but the music is more for the child of the 1960s or 1970s (who are now in their 50s and 60s). Some young people laugh at attempts of older worship leaders to connect with younger brothers and sisters with guitar licks and current dress (“was that guy a hippie with you, Jim?”). The traditional worship service, heavy with hymns and organ music, may be embraced by some religious youth, but the totality of the experience is adult-owned and adult-led. The attempt to have a young person assist in music leadership is a positive step, but for the most part youth know it is for adults and they are observers in the adult’s world of worship. The preaching is clearly for adults, with youth as an afterthought (if any thought).

Sermon preparation is directed to make scriptures relevant to adults and parents. Young people must adjust their thinking to the mind of an adult to get anything out of it. The point being, young people know they are sitting in a service that is designed and thought through in regards to adults. Some can handle it; some choose not to.

The age of people leading the worship service communicates who is in charge. If they are all people over fifty, young people get the message. If leadership is varied, then many age groups are included. This is an area of possible hope and easily can be changed. If the church has young people read Scripture, pray or play and sing special music, there would be a better connection to youth in the worship service.

To care for young people in a local church, there must be a deliberate attempt to address their needs.⁵⁷ If not, the needs will be overlooked, as culture directs us to the adult's needs and money-givers. The Falls Church had a hundred youth clean up the grounds, mulching, painting and serving around the church building this summer for two days. The response from some adults was, "Well, they are the ones who mess it up around here." Others were touched and teared up when they saw it. Just a brief mention in the announcements of the worship service would go a long way for parents and youth.

Youth services are for adults too. Churches can say they are for youth, can publicize them for youth, but the reason for youth service is to bless adults and parents. When a youth staff puts a young person in front of a congregation and has them sing or share their life, he or she is put in a difficult situation. They may be used to say to adults and leaders of the church, "Look at the great job I'm doing—look here, this is an example of what we are doing." There are exceptions to this bold statement, and the motives may be pure, but at times, youth services are for adults to see youth in action. This is a form of abuse and abandonment, whether known or not. When adolescents are put in front of a group of adults, they are put under undue pressure to perform for parents, youth leaders

⁵⁷ Chap Clark and Kara Eckmann Powell, *Deep Ministry in a Shallow World: Not-So-Secret Findings About Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 2006), 18.

and others. The middle school student will do anything asked to attempt to please; this is a form of abandonment, to use him or her to promote the church's needs.

Andrew Root in his book, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation*, writes that the youth worker in large churches has embraced the consumer culture in the same vein as the world. "The church youth ministry had a silver bullet that the para-church ministry did not—a large program budget. This large budget allowed the youth pastor to use consumer culture as a lubricant for relational contact."⁵⁸ Not only has the Church bought into consumer culture, but, relational youth workers rely on that same consumer culture to attract youth to programs and events. This can be seen in the focus on program events rather than discipleship of people. It is far easier to run an event than to get involved in the lives of students. Jesus administered events, but never lost His focus on ministering to people.

I am taken back to a parents' class I taught over ten years ago. I had my overheads and quotations and really wanted to impress parents as to how much I knew about youth and youth culture. Parents came to hear how they could care for their children better and some were even in fear of these upcoming years having a teenager in the house. To kick off the parents' class, I had an overhead transparency that had a list of the top problems in high schools in the 1930s (gum-chewing, hair-pulling, talking in class and giggling). Then I flashed the overhead with the shocking list for 1980: violence, drugs, pregnancy, suicide, and so forth. There were gasps of air as parents realized from where Americans have come. There was a move from talking in class to murder in the classroom. It made

⁵⁸ Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 61.

this point clear: things are not like they were years ago and they needed strong attention to care for their youth.

There was only one problem—the lists were wrong, they were made up and I had gotten them from some youth magazine that did not research this “study” very well. Mike Males, the author who writes aggressive books on youth and their mistreatment by government, claims there to be no such study, in fact it was a hoax attributed to the California Department of Education and *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine.⁵⁹ Apparently it was taken from a few brief comments made at a 1987 California teachers’ conference. Males sees the fact that no study was made as an example of attempts to shed bad light on recent generations. He notes that teenagers of the 1930s “horrified grown-ups of the day. In fact, the top school problem of the 1930’s was that half of all teens were not even in high school.”⁶⁰ This list has been printed and used more than a few times (even a youth service). Society has bought into this idea of how bad kids have become.

Worse than that, it has been used and monopolized in negative attempts to scapegoat this generation in order to promote agendas. If the list was not there, something else that would convince open and concerned parents that youth today are in a bigger crisis than they are could be found. If convinced that youth are in serious trouble, then parents would increase the value of those in youth ministry.

The vocational advancement of paid youth workers is an issue in regards to the abandonment and dismissal of the needs of youth. Youth workers have become a profession of some sort. Over eighteen years ago, Tony Campolo wrote about the dangers

⁵⁹ Males, *The Scapegoat Generation*, 259.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 259-61.

in the future as a result of the professionalization of youth ministry.⁶¹ He was concerned that the strong development of youth ministry technique would diminish the dynamic relationships associated with youth work. The professionalization of youth workers would replace spontaneity with rationality. Gladly, Mark Cannister, of The Department of Youth Ministry at Gordon College, writes this has not happened.⁶²

Cannister goes on to say there are places where youth ministry has become “too programmatic, too rational, and too routine” but for the most part youth ministry has “maintained its cutting edge.”⁶³ There are youth workers that are effective, but for some ministries, the professionalism has affected the relationship with kids and parents. The youth worker who gets more concerned with vocation and status in the church than care of young people may be tempted to move on to the bigger and better salary of the bigger and better church. If in professionalism, the youth pastor prioritizes technique over relationship, the youth pastor may work more on the program and less on the relationship with kids. The move to family ministry may not be an attempt to meet the needs of youth, but a way for youth workers to get promoted to real ministry with adults.

The model of Jesus in Scripture directs pastors to keep ministry before any program task. In Mark 2, Jesus is teaching in Capernaum when four men brought a paralyzed man to him. Unable to go through the door, they climbed the roof, dug a hole (or removed tiles) and lowered the man to Jesus. Jesus recognized the real needs of these

⁶¹ Anthony Campolo, *Growing up in America: A Sociology of Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 1989), 39.

⁶² In an article for the Youth Specialties web page titled “*Growing Up Without Selling Out: The Professionalism of Youth Ministry*”(see article on Youth Specialties webpage http://www.youthspecialties.com/freeresources/articles/pastpresentfuture/growing_up.php).

⁶³ Ibid.

people, made a point to the religious leaders, forgave sins and healed the man. He recognized real needs over felt needs. If this had happened in any youth ministry setting today, the men would have been disciplined for climbing on the roof, removing the tiles (or worse) and sent home for interrupting the teaching. Jesus recognized real needs, while others recognized or were distracted by felt needs. Later during preparation for a dinner, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened, while Martha told Jesus what to do, "Do you not care . . . tell her" (Mark 2:1-13). Mary had chosen the best (Luke 10:38-42).

There is no question that the promotion of church growth and examples of mega-churches have affected how youth work is done. Large attractive programs with multi-million dollar church youth facilities were unheard of in the early days of youth work. Priorities change with many of these larger programs as the task for youth workers becomes to fill the event and facility, not necessarily care for kids. Relationship with teens becomes one of attendance and behavior at programs and not real adolescent needs. When needs of youth workers (for instance the need to have the program run successfully and make attendance high) overshadow the needs of youth, there is a serious case of abandonment. Youth workers ignore needs to fulfill their own desires of a successful youth program. Just as parents have lost their way in seeing academics, sports and family in regards to their needs, youth workers use youth to build reputations and vocations to promote themselves. The same youth workers who claim parents ignore their children's needs do the same thing in relationships with youth in their charge.

When adolescents are challenged to be leaders before they are ready, they are set up for a potential big failure. Churches are trying to create "Super Christian Kids," like the academic Super Kids. This is seen again and again in work projects and mission trips.

These trips can have a strong influence in the life of teenagers, but they need to be handled in a healthy and thoughtful way, without building up too many expectations in and for young people. When pressure is put on a teenager to perform, he or she internally reacts with stress. Externally, the teenager may put up the front of the good student leader, but inside something else is happening in the adolescent. It seems that youth handle it differently, but there is stress that tells them to perform beyond their means and capability or perceived means and capability. That stress produces different reactions; one seems to be overload and a stunted spiritual life. After what seemed to be great, spiritual, deep mission trips in difficult places, certain youth drop off their church attendance. This could be due to unhealthy pressure that was too much for them before they were ready.

Student leadership is very much like this too. There is a desire to please youth leaders, God and the Church. The call to help beyond the means of an adolescent can result in a form of shutting down and moving away. When student leaders are given too much responsibility, it can cause them to deal with it by pulling away from personal devotions, the Church and leadership. Leaders must be careful to listen and minister according to the needs of individual youth. Pressure for students to “win their school” or bring “all of their friends,” sets up this generation for a disappointment and discouragement that can result in the stunting of spiritual growth.

The departure of youth workers from the ministry is a clear-cut abandonment of youth, causing a break in the expectation of long, true relationships. When an adult volunteer or paid staff leaves the youth group for any reason, it touches a nerve in the young person. This may be due to the cultural systemic abandonment that hits an

unhealed bruise. Care should be given that youth workers give a reasonable commitment and not make emotional promises they cannot keep, that could be setting up unrealistic expectations such as, “I love you, and of course I will always be here.”

There is a level of spiritual abuse that should be addressed in the life of leaders. When Christian leaders use people for their goals, they cross over into a form of serious abuse. This may sound extreme, but should be pointed out. Ken Blue addresses this in *Healing Spiritual Abuse: How to Break Free from Bad Church Experiences*. He writes, “Physical abuse means that someone exercises physical power over another causing physical wounds. Sexual abuse means that someone exercises sexual power over another, resulting in sexual wounds. And spiritual abuse happens when a leader with spiritual authority uses that authority to coerce, control, or exploit a follower, thus causing spiritual abuse.”⁶⁴ All spiritual leaders must take their leadership as from God, knowing they are under authority. They must not use the power given for any other reason than to heal and love. If they manipulate or control a young person for a program or ministry, they must repent immediately and change drastically.

“Power Posturing” is the first characteristic of an abusive system in a church or youth group write David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen.⁶⁵ A godly, loving character is the genuine spiritual authority needed in ministry. True authority and godly power come from God and not coercion. The development of a diverse ministry team with mutual accountability helps protect the youth and ministry from this worldly leadership.

⁶⁴ Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse: How to Break Free from Bad Church Experiences* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 11-12.

⁶⁵ David Johnson and Jeffrey VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1991), 63.

At The Falls Church, there is a group of interns that stay for nine months and serve in youth work. Half of them seem to stay on for two more years, but there is difficulty when some leave after getting close to a group of kids. The ministry works hard to prepare young people to deal with this, but some certainly get hurt. This type of abandonment is a dysfunctional program error that needs to be changed.

Youth workers, who love Christ and his kids, must learn from the true successes and serious mistakes of the past. The philosophy of Young Life is summarized by Char Meredith, “In a relaxed home setting, sitting on the floor with their friends, these kids let their world come to a standstill as they ponder this Jesus who could turn grown men around and start them on a totally new track.”⁶⁶ Probably the greatest demonstration of abandonment by the Church is when youth do not have an opportunity to hear clearly and reflectively the message of Jesus Christ. That is their greatest need.

A sophomore stood on his front porch, and said to me, “I was going to tell you, but you seemed too busy and distracted Sunday.” His parents were splitting up and he shut down. I have given my life to serve youth, but came across as too busy and distracted. Even after thirty-eight years of youth work there is a lot to learn. In the words of Shane Botwin in his graduation speech, “You have failed us all. Everything is not OK. We are alienated, de-sensitized, angry, and frightened.”

⁶⁶ Char Meredith, *It's a Sin to Bore a Kid: The Story of Young Life* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978), 11.

CHAPTER 3

PERSPECTIVE OF THE FALLS CHURCH YOUTH WORK

This chapter gives a brief history of the Falls Church youth ministry and discusses assets and challenges of this work. Looking at this work, a filter of four elements laid out by the early church in Acts 2:42-47 will be used. This passage gives a clear picture of the infant church before persecution forced it to spread through the world. It shows four basic elements or “programs” which the disciples committed and devoted; these programs are looked at more thoroughly in Chapter 4. Whereas many ministries and churches desire a biblical program and plan for their youth, leaders of these groups are quick to seek other authorities for their models and examples.¹ These models and examples are taken from the secular world, like business, sports,² recreation³ or other ideas⁴ that have little biblical foundation. A comparison of basic early church events and activities will be compared

¹ Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn, eds., *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties/Zondervan Pub. House, 2001), 109.

² International Bible Society, *Path to Victory: A Sports New Testament with the Testimonies of Athletes Who Are Winning in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1993).

³ E. Paul Allen, ed., *Best of Try This One: The Most Popular Ideas from the #1 Youth Ministry Resource* (Loveland, CO: Group Books, 2006).

⁴ Tony Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry: Exploring Cultural Shift, Creating Holistic Connections, Cultivating Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 2001).

with an active present day youth ministry. The structure and relationship from this “filter”⁵ of elements, demonstrated in the early church program that involved almost daily practices, may help instruct today’s leaders.

This chapter will attempt to perform an “exegesis” or evaluation of the youth work of The Falls Church high school ministry (named Cornerstone) using the basic elements discovered in Acts 2:42-47. The observations of weaknesses and strengths will lead to strategic recommendations to align the ministry with a biblical prototype. These elements can serve as a “filter” for future evaluations in regard to biblical methodology.

Introduction to The Falls Church and The Cornerstone Youth Ministry

The Falls Church was established in or before 1733.⁶ George Washington was a vestryman when it was built, before he served as a general and the first President of the United States. The original church building survived the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, housing soldiers and horses in both conflicts. The graveyard is filled with both Yankee and Confederate soldiers, some with gravestones, some without. The history is immense. The City of Falls Church, which sits about ten miles outside the nation’s capitol, is named after the church.

John Yates has been senior pastor for the last twenty-four years, and the first staff member he called to join him was a youth pastor. The church has grown much larger under Yates’s ministry and now has a membership of about 2400. Before leaving the

⁵ LeBar, *Education That Is Christian*, 158.

⁶ Joseph Hodge Spelman and Harold Alves, *Near the Falls: Two Hundred Years of the Falls Church* (Falls Church, VA: The Falls Church, 1969), 7.

American Episcopal Church, it was the largest church in the denomination. In the last five years it has planted four area-churches, one as close as fifteen minutes away.

The Falls Church recently realigned to the Anglican Community, withdrawing from the American Episcopalian denomination. This has made national and international news, as the church has bonded with at least twelve other Virginia congregations attempting to keep their congregation's property. The Anglican clergy have spent much time in this legal situation that has affected some of the needs of the congregation. The churches are under litigation, costing millions in legal fees. The Falls Church is helping the other congregations, placing a financial burden on its staff and programs. A few rulings have been made that favor one side or the other, but litigation will most likely continue in appeals for at least another year, costing the church millions more dollars.

The Cornerstone Youth Ministry has had a rich history. Jeff Taylor, Cornerstone's founder, was strongly influenced by Mark Senter, one of the first men to write on the history of youth work.⁷ Taylor began Cornerstone in the early 1990s with fifteen students in a living room. He built a strong small group ministry that fed the Sunday night Cornerstone gathering. Chuck Miller, a legend in youth work and a close friend of Yates, gave strategic consulting in significant times to the church and youth ministry. The ministry grew in discipleship and outreach, with about two hundred in weekly attendance and an outreach weekend with over three hundred in Ocean City, MD. As the numbers grew, the youth ministry was able to secure a number of youth positions with the support of the senior pastor.

⁷ Mark Senter, ed., *The Coming Revolution in Youth Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992).

The youth work was helped a great deal by a ministry called The Fellows Program, which was started by some visionary leadership in the church that was also involved in the National Prayer Breakfast movement. The fellows are a group of recent college graduates who come to The Falls Church for a special nine-month internship that helps young people of faith integrate their Christianity into workplaces in the Washington, DC area. About a dozen sharp, academically-strong graduates move into homes of members of The Falls Church and work in government and business offices attempting to develop Christian community. As they build community within their fellows group, they give about ten hours a week to serve in the youth ministry. This has been going on for over fourteen years. Each fellow helps lead a small group in the youth ministry. Some stay in the church after the year is over and some continue to work with the youth. Two fellows fulfill their job placement in the youth office.

As leadership changed in the youth ministry in the 1990s, the vision and philosophy became more modeled on the methods of Willow Creek from the Chicago-area. The philosophy became more “seeker sensitive,” hoping to reach more postmodern youth. Rob Bell’s media curriculum was adopted, as was a strong attempt to reach the young people with media. A “new vision” of youth ministry was discussed that drastically changed the program that had been in place for over fifteen years. However, as paid youth staff discussed the new postmodern culture that youth came from, they decided to de-centralize Cornerstone into four “Home Groups,” based around geography and school districts. These changes produced a great deal of anxiety in many families; some left the church. Two well received changes were breaking off the middle school from Cornerstone into its own group called Crossroads and moving the winter outreach

weekend to Rockbridge Young Life Camp. After over a year of discussing changes, they launched in 2005, as the youth pastor and his wife, who was paid staff, left for seminary.

The younger coordinator staff attempted to implement this new direction and received short-lived support from parents, church staff and the youth themselves. The staff worked hard to move toward this new vision, but eventually gave up and left all together. They collectively resigned on June 30, 2006, with one staying for an additional month to assist in office matters and finish out a local urban mission trip for the middle school. Members of the new staff began July 1, 2006.

The Transition

My personal ministry has been strongly influenced by having served with Richard Halverson,⁸ my first pastor. Halverson grew up in Henrietta Mears' ministry at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, California in the 1940s.⁹ He helped develop Forest Home Camp,¹⁰ The Presidential Prayer Breakfast,¹¹ and served as the Chairman of the Board of World Vision in the 1970s. He served as Pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland for over twenty-six years, then, served as Chaplain to the Senate. I met Christ under his leadership as a young person at Fourth Presbyterian Church. I was hired as his Junior High Director in the 1970s, and served with him for six years. In that time, he shared tremendous insights into biblical leadership. When moving to First

⁸ Richard C. Halverson, *No Greater Power: Perspective for Days of Pressure* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), 9.

⁹ Barbara Hudson Powers, *The Henrietta Mears Story* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1957).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jeff Sharlet, *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008).

Presbyterian Church Orlando as the new youth pastor, I asked him for any advice. In the Senate Dining Room, he said, “Jim, I would encourage you to move slow. I would think in terms of three years. Focus on developing relationships and trust. The first year, make very few changes, just develop trust. Then, in the second year, while developing trust, decide what you think you need to do, but wait until the third year to make any changes.” This was strong and great advice. The difficult part is to follow it. This advice was in my mind as we moved into new ministry at The Falls Church.

My first task seemed to be hiring some staff. Before beginning at The Falls Church, I hired a local Young Life friend, Mike Steenhoek, who started the first month with me. He was qualified to be an area director for Young Life, but felt the call to serve in the local church. He was very helpful and around thirty years old, which helped balance out my age of over fifty.

In the first month, we scheduled three parents’ meetings, three youth leaders’ meetings and three youth lunches. The parents’ meetings were well attended by over 130 parents. They expressed a real desire to see Cornerstone back on Sunday nights, with the whole group together. The youth felt strongly the same way, loudly voicing that their group had been hurt by this new change and begged us to restore Cornerstone. Over one hundred youth had left the high school ministry in the last year, with some going to other churches. Families had left the church because their youth had disconnected.

The youth leader meetings had a different spirit. Only four of the listed thirty youth leaders showed up for the first two dinner meetings. A few expressed anger at me for not committing to continue the Home Group vision. In the last meeting of the youth leaders in late August, one leader walked out in apparent disgust with my message that

we were going to focus on relationships over program. There were also concerns about my age voiced to the church youth by these youth leaders.

Cornerstone began in September, keeping the program simple. The one change was adding was a four-dollar-dinner meal. The senior class was unresponsive, but the other classes responded well to the simple program that included dinner, mixer, music from the worship band and a short, challenging, relational message, but almost no media. It grew to a hundred within six months. Over half of the youth leaders responded negatively, so Mike and I worked hard to recruit new leaders.

These new leaders were very positive and helped get the ministry going again. Young couples joined the youth family and immediately grasped the need for biblical sharing and gave their small groups scriptural teaching to understand the whole counsel of God. Their small groups grew as a model for the rest. The addition of two relational female youth staff increased connection with girls, which was also needed.

The desire for some sort of a student leadership core group was apparent, so the fact that most Anglican churches have little emphasis on Sunday morning classes was monopolized. A youth discipleship class was planned in that time-slot called Crew. This was a group for those who wanted to go a little deeper, with a strong emphasis that depth is grounded in love (1 Corinthians 13). The commitment to be a part of Crew was laid out in a one-page flier that was mailed to a hundred on the mailing list. It stated the commitments to Crew were to have a daily Quiet Time, to be at Crew Sunday mornings at 9:00AM three out of four Sundays a month, to learn what being a disciple is and a willingness to disciple one other person in Cornerstone.

To join Crew, the high schoolers were to write a letter to the youth director sharing their testimony and stating their desire and commitment to be a part of Crew. Twenty-four letters were received and forty-four youth showed up the first morning. Those who did not write letters were not asked to leave, but asked to write their letter during Crew that first morning.

A pancake breakfast cooked by a few dads was provided and The Crew began. After prayer, Cornerstone was planned and John 15 studied, as a passage from which to understand what a high school disciple looks like. Each week, a one-page sheet with a passage was given to students to read through and pull applicable observations. The program was basic with breakfast, quiet time, sharing from the passage, teaching, discussion and challenges about the needs of the whole Cornerstone group. The teaching included tools for developing a personal devotional life and a plan to study Scripture throughout the year. Students then attended worship, some with their families.

The only outreach program to adolescents of Cornerstone was the winter weekend known as Breakaway, which was held at a Rockbridge Young Life Camp. There was a great feeling and tradition about Breakaway in the community and most students at the local high school, George Mason High School, knew about it. Former leaders ran the program with skits and games, and Steve Fizhugh spoke. Fizhugh was a former Denver Bronco who played in the Super Bowl and spoke the Gospel boldly, in contrast to the seeker sensitive method just the year before.

The need to develop adult leadership was addressed with a Tuesday night dinner bringing adult leaders together for a time of fellowship and community, not just a meeting. They arrived to the church for a dinner prepared by parents. After a meal

together, leaders would sing, pray and share from a passage, developing one point in youth ministry philosophy or skill. This grew and they were asked to consider inviting mature friends to join. By year two, there were over sixty leaders. A retreat and once-a-month social time are planned for the next year. The needs of youth and how to best address them in small groups and Cornerstone messages were discussed. Some of the leaders see the Tuesday evening dinner gatherings as the highlight of their busy, Washington DC week. The adult leaders are called The Youth Family, because of the desire to create a family-like relational community among the leadership.

The program of Sunday night Cornerstone, Small Groups and Crew were not places that high school students could bring a seeking youth or friend. Cornerstone parties were added, which included no program, planned once a month over the weekend at one of the youth's homes. The parties saw youth bring friends, but that needed improvement. The primary outreach is the once a year Breakaway Weekend, which has grown to serving over six hundred youth.

Cornerstone Through the Filter of the Elements

As we look at the actions of the early church, we see the regular relational events of the community. These events are the program of the early church. In Acts 2:42-47 are outlined four elements of the program of the early church.

Worship the Prayers ταῖς προσευχαῖς

Worship is one element of program that can be intergenerational without much change. The Falls Church has a family service on Saturday night and six services on Sunday in two different sanctuaries. They are diverse in style and content. There are three

traditional worship services that are liturgical and one contemporary service on Sunday morning. There is also a service in the new sanctuary that has leadership robed, a traditional choir and Anglican liturgy. The Lord's Supper is served at least monthly at all services. A majority of Falls Church youth attend the morning contemporary worship service, so this will be the primary service evaluated.

The Sunday morning 11:00AM service is contemporary in style and the largest service, with standing room only most Sundays. Most of the youth that attend church worship attend this service with or without their parents. There are prayers written out and prayers that are spontaneous. Music is lead by a praise band, with a twenty-five-year-old worship leader. The clergy desires worship to be Christ-centered and communicates that to youth acolytes. The acolytes participate in worship by assisting the clergy with set-up and presentation of The Lord's Supper. Student Sunday is usually held once a year, the Sunday after Easter. Youth run the service, lead the music and prayers, and share. The entire church is blessed by young people leading them in worship.

While in seminary, Peter Wagner¹² said there are three ways to see if a worship service is appropriate for an age group: style of music, age of people leading up front and content of the sermon. The Falls Church has a varied style of worship through its many services. The music in the contemporary service seems to appeal to age groups from forty to children. The service is packed even throughout the summer, even when the senior pastor is not preaching. Many are under the age of fifteen and sit through the whole service. The music is contemporary and occasionally youth play in the worship band.

¹² C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Be Healthy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

Content of the sermon is easily digestible by most age groups. Youth follow the sermon and some take notes. Sometimes, the preacher breaks from the sermon and talks specifically and directly to teenagers. When the rector says, “This is important for you young people as you deal with this daily in your world,” everyone’s attention is focused, not just the youth. The worship service takes youth into account in preaching and music.

Youth have an opportunity to worship with all generations corporately as well as with a youth fellowship. There are three worship bands within Cornerstone Youth ministry. Cornerstone youth are sensitive to the purpose of worship, not just singing or entertaining. The youth, as well as The Youth Family lead prayers. Youth and Youth Family share this devotion to the element of worship. Approximately half of youth that attend Cornerstone on Sunday night attend worship services at The Falls Church.

The Apostles Teaching Instruction προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ

A few years ago, the youth of Cornerstone received a brief message on Sunday night or a small group leader may have taught during the sharing time. There was no specific time set aside for instruction for the high school. In the present culture, there is a real need to inspire and entice young people to discover answers to difficult issues, rather than just repeat clever sounding arguments they were impressed with sophomorically. Allan Bloom pointed out in 1987 that culture was heading toward a shutting out of real thinking and processing even on the college level. Bloom states that college professors can count on every student entering college believing truth is relative.¹³

¹³ Allan David Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 9.

Young people must be exposed to a wider experience of learning by occasionally mentioning excellent books and studies on issues they face almost daily. Many youth have their faith challenged by teachers and other students in class about science, history, sociology and numerous other fields, and seem to have nowhere to turn. These classroom discussions can be filled with ignorance and Jerry Springer like arguments. Dean Overman's *A Case Against Accident and Self-Organization*, on probability and intelligent design was mentioned in one class.¹⁴ One of the students said it changed his whole perspective on science. That student is now a student at Princeton, and is embracing the sciences with his faith. The basic need for teaching with Crew on Sunday morning has been met. The teaching has at times been verse-by-verse through a book of the Bible or sometimes topical, bringing in teachers to discuss issues of concern.

The primary difference in this high school Sunday morning teaching and other Sunday schools is the commitment level. The Sunday morning Crew gathering is a time when any high schooler can attend, but asked to write a letter expressing why they desire to be taught. Although none are rejected for not writing a letter of intent, it is clear the far majority of youth in attendance have thought through why they are there and expressed in writing the purpose of their attendance. The goal is to be a disciple, prepared to disciple another, not just sit and absorb in a church class. They are called to action. It is seen as teaching with an end in mind: being a disciple and discipling another individual. The gathering is a time of development, not just of Bible content. Biblical content is central, but with a goal of transforming lifestyle and reproducing that lifestyle in another.

¹⁴ Dean L. Overman, *A Case Against Accident and Self-Organization* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

This interpersonal connection is a primary difference in teaching a class, to using teaching to prepare impacting another's life. As high schoolers come into the room at Crew, they are aware the teaching they receive is to be applied to the task of discipling a younger person. This expected application makes a stronger impact and results in an intensity of learning, with specific purpose. The fact that some youth attending Crew will be called on to disciple another gives the gathering a purpose that refocuses purpose from attending Sunday school to a vision and mission that affect change in the life of another. This is a hands-on discipleship class, with application to a lifestyle of following Christ.

Sunday night gatherings now incorporate biblical teaching. Youth have been taught on the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, Old Testament biographies and questions from the Alpha series. These teachings have been well received, and are the shared responsibility of youth staff leadership. The approach is a little different, with more attention grabbing illustrations than the verse-by-verse teaching on Sunday morning. The major goal here is to express the Word of God in a culturally relevant way.

The Fellowship κοινωvία

The fellowship element is met in various ways in the Cornerstone ministry of The Falls Church. Although a "program" is not true fellowship, a "program" that recognizes the priority of fellowship can help bring about these positive relationships. The feeling of closeness, the actions of care and the sharing of lives cannot be mandated by a program or event. However, intimate relationships can grow and develop in the midst of a weekly gathering that has a dynamic commitment.

The fellowship of the early church was relational and any biblical program of fellowship must also be relational in nature. By relational, it is meant companionship-oriented fashion as opposed to goal-oriented style criticized by Root, focused on incarnational relationship style, as was the early church.¹⁵ A comparison must be made of how the devoted fellowship of Acts 2 compares to the program of Cornerstone.

The priority of fellowship begins with the youth staff. As the youth staff experiences Christ-centered fellowship together it overflows to adult leaders. As adult leaders experience fellowship, it overflows to youth through small groups, relationships and other gatherings. The youth staff consists of eight team members. These include an administrative assistant, a middle school male leader, middle school female leader, high school male leader and high school female leader. Each year, two fellows serve in the ministry during the school year and during the summer college age summer staff.

The youth staff is at the core of relationships of the youth ministry. Each of the coordinators has their area of care. Every Tuesday staff meets for prayer, Bible sharing and discussion of ministry needs. Relationships are considered more important than program, but tasks of program always get done. The youth staff pulls into its fellowship the fellows or summer staff depending on the season. The emphasis is on relationships.

The next level of adult leadership is a fellowship known as the Youth Family. As the youth staff develops and expresses community, it overflows to the relationships of the Youth Family. This group has grown to over eighty who participate. The Youth Family manual is enclosed in the appendix. Each youth staff has twenty youth families to care

¹⁵ Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 23.

for. The Youth Family gathers for dinner Tuesday nights, has a training retreat in the fall and personally connects with their Youth Staff coordinator every month. There is a real sense of devotion here with a critical mass, but not all.

The Youth Family adult leaders meet weekly over dinner and discuss how to serve the youth better, with their own fellowship of worship and biblical instruction. The Youth Family receives instruction in biblical daily living as well as youth ministry training with skill development. They receive instruction in: adolescent development, youth culture, biblical philosophy of youth ministry; as well as practical helps of how to lead a small group, give a talk, lead a young person to Christ and deal with counseling issues. They are required to attend a four-hour class on child abuse prevention taught by the denomination. The commitment level of devotion varies, with some very devoted and others half-hearted. There is a need for younger Youth Family members to be mentored by some from the rest of the congregation.

The next level of Youth Leadership is the Cornerstone Team of student leaders and Crew. These student leaders are in the process of taking strong leadership in the ministry through programs and relationships. About half are devoted in some sense of responsibility to the group, but others are not ready yet, or distracted by other priorities.

Cornerstone small groups seem the best picture of relational devotion in fellowship. Each group has two adult leaders who call students weekly before small group to “check in on” them and remind them of set time together. These calls are usually more than just informational, but conversational in personal care and accountability. Youth look forward to calls from their youth leaders and sometimes are very talkative.

Many of these groups are more like “care” groups than simply small groups. The Youth Family takes special care and interest in the holistic growth of the teenagers in their charge. Each Youth Family focuses on four–to-five youth and attempts to connect in areas of their lives. They sometimes attend sports activities, play performances or just invest time in developing strong relationships of trust. The Youth Family uses 1 Peter 5, as they attempt to “Shepherd their flocks of God.” This leadership is critical in the whole ministry of Cornerstone.

Small groups fulfill the basic need for close relationships and the goal of intimacy. They meet weekly, usually right before the bigger Cornerstone group meeting. The groups are split by gender and grade, taking into account previous close relationships. Cornerstone small groups are the strongest element of the ministry because of the Youth Family leadership. Hundreds of youth are devoted to their small group fellowship and their leaders are devoted to them.

The Worship

Collective worship is probably the greatest strength of the The Falls Church, not surprising of Anglicans. People of all generations gather for services and youth are welcomed, encouraged and enthused by the Sunday morning times. Music is varied depending on service and many of the same songs are sung at the contemporary service as in their youth fellowship gatherings. Young people are sincerely greeted by ushers (mostly in their senior years) and feel part of the service. It is “their church” and they have a family connection. Sermons relate and connect to their experience and they can follow without a college education. Rarely does a young person say they had a hard time

following the message. They sing, pray and worship enthusiastically. Youth read scripture and give testimonies sometimes. The acolyte group is growing and it has become “cool” to be an acolyte.

Although it is not a seeker church, there is a warm, welcoming approach that is important for young people. When the senior pastor praises youth from the pulpit for the new “Devouring God Series” or start up of a new ministry, they walk out of service empowered and encouraged. This is critical in the connection of youth that are isolated and hurt.¹⁶ They desperately need to be part of an extended family, and many have found it at The Falls Church.

The pastor and clergy are largely responsible for this. They share vision for the youth ministry and reach out to them in services. Sometimes, comments are made about the youth from the front that are encouraging and supportive. This sensitivity by the senior pastor is invaluable to the growth of youth ministry in a local church. Youth are asked to share testimonies and are encouraged by the whole congregation when they do.

The Lord’s Supper and Baptism are practiced regularly in an orderly way, with clear explanations to young people. The acolyte ministry allows young people interested in further participation to meet with clergy and help with up-front and behind the scenes areas of worship. This administration of the sacraments follows the model in Acts 2.

Expression/Outreach “The Lord Added Daily to Those who Were Finding Salvation”

The expression of fellowship overflowed from the early church to the people outside. Some were drawn in, some just observed and some mocked the early church. At

¹⁶ Clark, *Hurt*, 21.

this time, The Falls Church is under scrutiny in the local community in regards to leaving the Episcopal Church and re-aligning under a Bishop of the Anglican Nigerians. The local Falls Church newspaper, *The Falls Church Press*, writes articles expressing that the church and clergy are filled with less than integrity.¹⁷ This has raised some eyebrows, but the church is still held in high esteem in the community. Cornerstone as a group is well loved and respected in the local community. Gilbert Bilezikian writes in his work on Christian community, *Community 101*, “Whenever oneness occurs, however, it swiftly comes under attack from anti-community forces loose in the world.”¹⁸

The outreach ministry of Cornerstone has two basic areas: evangelism and service. The program of Cornerstone contained a great deal of service opportunities three years ago. However there were few specific youth evangelism programs.

The evangelistic programs were basically “The Gift” and the Breakaway weekend. The Gift is a yearly event in December when youth invite their friends to come to a production by the youth that expresses their faith about the gift of Jesus Christ to humankind. It was effective in attendance, and over the last few years turned into a concert of bands that performed and each did a Christmas song. A message was given toward the end of the program about the love of Christ and the Christ-centered meaning of Christmas. It was effective in pulling in non-churched people. The skit and message has been effective. The Breakaway weekend would then be announced as an opportunity to experience more about Jesus Christ.

¹⁷ Nicholas F. Benton, “The Sad Case of the Falls Church,” *The Falls Church Press*, April 9, 2009.

¹⁸ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 46.

The Breakaway weekend has been the most effective evangelistic event of the youth ministry. The Youth Family and youth staff run the program at Rockbridge, a Young Life Camp. Hundreds of youth bring friends to hear the speaker whose messages are evangelistic in nature. It also becomes a re-connection point for dozens of youth.

The need for a more regular ministry to reach out to the lost was apparent. The youth staff attempted to address this with a monthly ministry that just began this past year. Once weekend a month, the ministry hosts a Cornerstone Party with no program to encourage Cornerstone youth to bring friends from school to meet their church friends.

These parties are non-alcoholic, non-drug, basically supervised events at homes of some of the youth. This builds community and helps introduce youth to the leaders of Cornerstone. These are fairly well attended and meet outreach goals. These gave the high school youth an opportunity to bring friends on a more consistent regular basis. Contact work, a phrase coined and developed by Young Life, is also a major evangelistic tool that youth staff and Youth Family commit to. Staff and Youth Family are on campus at least every other week for games and other events. That is having a good presence.

The other expression of outreach is service, which is pretty strong with several work projects and mission trips. Youth enjoy these immensely and it has tremendously transformed their lives. In summer 2010, youth served in West Virginia with a rural project, Mississippi with a Katrina restoration project and South Africa with an AIDS Awareness Ministry. Other youth went with families on mission trips to three continents. Altogether about one hundred youth went on service mission trips. These trips impact those being served, but more greatly the youth who serve on them. Youth experience the work of the Church and are unified in this work. The impacts on the families whose

homes are rebuilt are demonstrated with tears and pictures, but the life lessons in teenagers are eternal. The local church supports them and is blessed with their reports.

There is also the positive impact on the local secular community that hears about these trips. Non-believers helped raise money to support these trips. There was positive talk in the community to a fundraiser that used a hundred plastic pink flamingos to “flamingo yards” of friends in the middle of the night for a donation towards the trips. It raised awareness to our trips and about 7,000 dollars. A Car Wash in May 2007 raised over 14,000 dollars, as 120 youth washed over 500 cars. People in the area heard about these trips and communicated positive talk about how youth at The Falls Church were helping Katrina victims and others as far away as Africa.

Assets and Challenges of the Youth Work at Falls Church

There has been significant, positive spiritual transformation in lives of the high-school group, Cornerstone, and many conversions in the middle-school ministry. This past year, over one hundred middle schoolers expressed they had given their lives to Jesus Christ at the Middle School Breakaway weekend, most of them for the first time.

The program is balanced with programs of nurture and outreach that are modeled after the community of Acts 2. The four elements are well represented and developed to a balanced level. There is also tremendous support from the Rector, excellent staffing positions, and a strong biblical philosophy. There is much to be thankful for.

There is however a concern that although youth are being folded into the community of Cornerstone, it has become more social connection in a high school group than definite conversion experiences. It is not, “every day the Lord was adding to those

who were finding salvation,” but, “every week the Lord added to those who were attending Cornerstone.” This is far short of the biblical example in Acts 2.

There are youth that are not Christians hanging around the ministry, but not responding to the call of Christ at this time. The youth staff and Youth Family work hard to communicate and preach the Gospel. All the work done is useless if youth do not respond to the call of Christ for new life.

The upfront teaching and messages in the large group are Gospel and Christ-centered. It is a goal to specifically share the Gospel directly at least once a month at Cornerstone. After the clear Gospel presentations on Sunday evenings, youth have a chance to surrender their lives to Christ. Feedback on the originality and clarity of the messages has been given. The teaching on Sunday morning is biblical and direct. Lack of conversion experiences leads to two possible conclusions; today’s cultural adolescence in America is opposed to the reception of the Gospel; or the adult leadership is not sharing the Gospel outside the program of the ministry.

The transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ (assuming the Church has not heard it too much) teaches that all humanity are hopelessly lost in sin and desperately need the Savior to redeem them by dying and shedding His blood. Those who call on the name of the Lord must repent and receive the new life He has earned for them. Believers must be redeemed, reconciled, justified and sanctified.

Every area of the Gospel mentioned seems diminished by youth culture. Culture has communicated to youth these needs are irrelevant now, due to new technology and new belief systems that have been embraced. Media culture may be so strong that it has blinded young people from the need for Christ. There seems to be a veil on youth today.

The “runaway American dream”¹⁹ has been strongly communicated to youth that salvation is found in sensuality, material possessions and rock-star status. A young lady that attended Cornerstone three years ago was invited to an *MTV My Super Sweet Sixteen Party* and experienced disappointment to find out the price tag to have her birthday party considered for the filming of the show had gone up from 100,000 dollars to over 200,000 dollars, disqualifying this particular family. She was not sure she was going to still attend her friend’s party after the rejection by MTV. One episode showed a sixteen-year old birthday girl throw a tantrum because the color of the gift car she received during her 200,000-dollar party from her parents was not the color she wanted. Young people have put security in treasures on Earth; “The Bondage of Wealth,” as Dallas Willard describes it, has a cost in personal security.²⁰ All this money thrown at a party for a sixteen-year old did not result in even securing friends. Youth have been abandoned to media and materialism, put in front of the TV with a Disney movie to keep them quiet so mommy can have some time of her own. There is a spiritual cost to this. Even non-believers see this dangerous direction, sometimes more clearly than leaders in the Church.

Jacob Needleman, a professor of Philosophy at San Francisco State University, has written two books on the soul. One book is *Money and The Meaning of Life*.²¹ In this book, he writes that obsession with money and compulsion for material wealth has undercut personal authenticity (soul). This undercutting is weakening understanding of identity. He also writes in his book, *The American Soul, Rediscovering the Wisdom of*

¹⁹ Bruce Springsteen, *Born to Run* (New York: Laurel Canyon Music, 1975).

²⁰ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

²¹ Jacob Needleman, *Money and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1994).

The Founders, that examples of personal sacrifice and commitment to admirable qualities of founding fathers would help get culture back on track.²² He is well aware of the weaknesses in the country and does an excellent job discussing the need for clear development in personal core issues as a way to nurture the soul.

Marano writes of the rubber-cushioned surfaces in playgrounds, sanitizing gels (one-third of parents send them to school with children), excessive accommodations and the “fragility factor” of youth today. She says this is creating a nation of “weak” people who are unable to deal with normal day-to-day problems. College students are now regularly confronting their professors with cell phones in hand stating that their moms want to talk to them about the grade they received. Mom comes to the rescue for the poor twenty-year old who does not like his grade. Mom comes to the rescue on the playground. It is said to even be happening in the workplace, after college.

In a small group of county champion lacrosse players in high school recently, they were recounting a fistfight they witnessed out of school and later expressed that most of them had never been in a fistfight. They said that no one at school gets in fights because of the severe trouble one would get into. The police on site would be right on the scene and suspensions, expulsions and arrest would be executed rapidly. I re-counted to them the fifteen-to-twenty fistfights I was in as a teenager and how it resulted in close friendships in some cases. These huge high schoolers, who were considered the toughest in the school, were shocked and amazed. In thirty-eight years of youth work, I don’t think I’ve seen this before. It is possible that the control and monitoring of teenagers has

²² Jacob Needleman, *The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders* (New York: J.P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2002).

created a generation that is unable to deal with conflict unless an authority figure intervenes and resolves it. No wonder people go to court like never before. The bully that got a black eye learned the cost to being a bully. The one being picked on got to learn to stand up occasionally.

This brings up the challenge of excuses in youth ministry. It seems every boy between the ages of five and nineteen has Attention Deficit Disorder. Not to dismiss that there are youth or children that need help with medication, or special counseling with care to deal with hyperactivity, but every error in judgment, action or irresponsibility cannot be interpreted as a medical case. The authors of *Driven to Distraction* state, “Once you catch on to what this syndrome is all about, you’ll see it everywhere.”²³ We may have pushed youth to a lifestyle of not being able to focus on Christ by literally distracting them with sensuality and materialism. We may be the thorns of Mark 4 that “choke the life” out of the message so the seed will not grow.

A strange example of accommodating every area of children’s lives is when young people were required to write a letter explaining why they would want to be in Crew or Leadership Team. Parents now tell us that Johnny wants to be in leadership, but was unable to write a letter for various time-related reasons. They actually write the letter for the high schooler, explaining why he or she should want to be in the group. When the requirement for students to commit to have their own quiet time is explained, the parents feel it is a little too hard to require that. This never happened ten or even five years ago. Some parents only want their youth to be in a youth ministry leadership group for their

²³ Edward M. Ratey and John J. Hallowell, *Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), 3.

college admissions resume. In today's culture, adults have set up teenagers with material excess and constant monitoring, and a lifestyle that causes them to feel that they do not need to call on Christ for salvation.

The culture of the early church understood the need for a Savior. The culture of America does not see its need, but wants to be loved. The culture of the early church in Jerusalem understood repentance and submission, not a negotiation of acceptable and allowable drug use, pre-marital sex and church attendance. The “what's the least we have to do to get in” mentality may stem from adult leadership. A society exists in the Church that does not count the cost in lifestyle; they want to be Christian materialists, Christian drug-users and Christian fornicators. They want to negotiate with God on lifestyle and repentance.²⁴ Devotion to Christ or to a body of believers seems to be considered options for later in life. In contrast, the Church in Acts was devoted.

The second reason there may not be more conversions in the ministry is that some leadership are not presenting the Gospel in small groups and personal relationships with youth. Leadership needs to internalize, grasp and dispense the Gospel to young people. Relying on worldly methods to change lives will not give spiritual transformation.

It seems sometimes there has been a substitution of transparency for proclamation of the Gospel. There are leaders that connect with students on a personal level, resulting in strong emotional relationships. Some “sharing of lives” is important, and is encouraged, but needs clear guidelines. Duffy Robbins, in his excellent book on youth

²⁴ Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007), 92.

ministry, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure*, lists some that would be helpful for any youth ministry to adhere to.²⁵

The leadership cannot give what they do not have.²⁶ The Gospel is eternal and the means of transformation of young people today and every generation. No methods, programs or technology will replace the Gospel. “I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then the Gentile” (Romans 1:16).

The other deep concern is that the youth work at The Falls Church needs to be more intentional about ministering inter-generationally. If parents can be involved in more ways, most likely some of the issues mentioned may be addressed in appropriate and healthy ways. Each element and dimension of the program needs to be evaluated to see how it can be integrated more into the life of the whole congregation. It has a history of traditional youth ministry that needs to be more family friendly, bringing the youth more into the life of the church and bringing other generations into the youth program.

²⁵ Duffy Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties Academic, 2004), 111.

²⁶ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development* (Lake Forest, CA: Xulon Press, 2007), 11.

PART TWO
FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 4

THE RELATIONSHIPS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH COMMUNITY

Theological Foundation for Christ-Centered Community

After Pentecost, the infant Church gathered in Jerusalem. With no precedent for a community centered in the newfound faith of their Lord Jesus Christ, they launched out to discover their new life together. An exegesis of this passage will give a picture of this new community.

The Early Church Ministry - Exegesis of Acts 2:42-47

Now, they were devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Fear came upon each person, and many signs and wonders were being done through the apostles. All those who believed were in the same place and shared everything. They were selling their properties and possessions and distributing (the proceeds from) them to all, as anyone had a need. And everyday they continued (meeting) together in the temple. They broke bread house by house and shared (their) food with gladness and humility. They praised God and had favor before all the people. And the Lord added converts daily in that place.

– Acts 2:42-47

This passage summarizes the community, structure and relationships of the new, infant church. It demonstrates the life of community internally (v. 42) and with those outside the community (v. 47). This is a summary text, bridging and stating the condition of the church. These summary texts are used by the author in Acts (Acts 4:32-37; 5:12;

16) to demonstrate how the group has clear, strong, deliberate unity of mind, purpose and relationship.¹ It is a picture of the first church before persecution arrives, found later in the Book of Acts. Luke-Acts is a literary unit that takes the reader from the life of Christ to the development of the early church.²

This summary passage ties the event of Pentecost to the rest of the book of Acts. The record of the Pentecost event demonstrates the internal transformation of believers, witnessed by outsiders and their observation of God at work (that some mislabeled as possible alcohol intoxication). The mighty wind and fiery tongues show the presence of God (Exodus 19:18, 24:17; 1 Kings 18:38; 19:11-13), demonstrating that God is directing this new work and community. A “witness to the end of the earth” (1:8) is occurring before their eyes, as Jews are gathered from all over the Diaspora. Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) ushered in confusing tongues; Pentecost restored clear language bringing the Church together. This promise of Abraham has been fulfilled in this group with understanding, unity and a new family of God, Christ’s Church.

Peter’s preaching of the Gospel (2:14-36) explains the events to insiders and outsiders and continues the “witness” (1:8) of the message of Jesus. The outpouring of the Spirit upon His people, people of normal status and common stature socially harkens back to Joel’s eschatological prophecy. Peter, described as an uneducated man, communicates that the messianic texts of Psalms 16:8-11, 110:1, and 132:11 refer to

¹ Darrell L. Bock, ed., *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 149.

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 187-202.

Jesus, His Lord, not David. Peter is the leader and spokesperson, as demonstrated throughout the Gospels and continuing here in Acts.

The strong call for Israel to repentance, an offer of salvation from the world and a re-alignment to God is found here. “What shall we do?” is the response in contrast to the mocking and confusion by other onlookers before (2:13). As communicated in the Gospels, some respond to the message and change, while some do not. This promise is “to you and your children,” for the Jewish people and “their descendants.” There is a new Kingdom, a new hope in Christ. It is for “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (2:21).” These people make up the restored people of God. This new community is Jewish in birth, character and culture. They attend Temple together and the people receive favor from outsiders. It includes Jews from all over the Diaspora that speak with different languages, with the blessing of the Spirit. The foundation of the new Church is with Jews, who have a basic understanding of the Law, faith and customs.

The new believers “devoted” themselves. This is from the Greek word προσκατερέω. It means the community met faithfully with strong persistence and diligence. These concepts of perseverance and endurance partnered with steadfastness. This imperfect periphrastic construction, προσκατεροῦντες, shows the ongoing faithful devotion they possessed. This “devoting themselves” occurs ten times in the New Testament, six times in Acts (1:14, 2:42, 2:46, 6:4, 8:13, 10:7). It is important to see the early church devotion and commitment highlighted by the author. It is a strong priority,

re-aligning and re-addressing all other priorities.³ This devotion strikes at the core of their being, not just a meeting to attend, but a re-evaluation of the center of their lives.

The devotion mentioned numerous times cannot be overstated in the life of the early church.⁴ It was central in their relationships and focus of their time, energy and resources. The new community was not an appointment they reserved weekly, but, the central purpose of their lives. Their priorities completely changed. Their vocations and tasks were seen in a completely different light, and affected all areas of life and family. They were devoted to one another. Their hope was restored in a relational community that was centered in Christ, His work and His people. The new Kingdom has arrived.

The four elements⁵ of the new community are emphasized by the article τῆ: “the” teaching, “the” fellowship, “the” breaking of bread and “the” prayers. These four areas are distinct specific programs or events: the teaching of the apostles (τῆ διδασκῆ τῶν ἀποστόλων); the fellowship (τῆ κοινωνία); the breaking of the bread (τῆ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου); and the prayers (ταῖς προσευχαῖς).⁶ There seems to be two groupings of the four elements: teaching and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer. Although they are distinct areas, these elements are connected and interdependent on each other.

The first element of the early church is apostolic teaching (διδασκῆ or τῆ διδασκῆ τῶν ἀποστόλων). This term for “teaching” is referred to thirty times in the New

³ Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 55.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 73.

⁵ George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), 50.

⁶ Bock, *Acts*, 149.

Testament, five times in Luke-Acts. Teaching or instruction is important to the early church, as Jesus directed His disciples to “teach them to observe all I commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).” Teaching most likely included all that Jesus Himself taught of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God, which centered on His death, burial and resurrection. Teaching had the authority of the apostles, imparted to them directly and personally by Jesus. Ethical and practical teaching was most likely included in this teaching.

Instruction was first in the list, which may have stressed its importance to new believers. Teaching communicated to the early church what was important in their new life together, how to act with each other and with outsiders. It likely dealt directly with the clear message of the love of Jesus, as well as the need to re-focus lives toward the Kingdom of God. The style was probably Jesus-like, with parables repeated and strong condemnation of hollow religious external phoniness.⁷ They most likely gathered around an apostle and listened to him recount the healings, interactions and messages of Jesus. Questions and answers would follow, with participants engaged fully as they were in the presence of people who in the last few years had walked physically with Jesus.

Old Testament Scripture would be seen in a different light, as the words of Jesus would be spoken, through firsthand memory only months before. They actually saw and heard what they were taught (1 John 1). This teaching had authority and strength, as direct from men who eye-witnessed the Sermon on the Mount, the feeding of multitudes, the healing of the blind man, the dangerous interactions and debates with the Pharisees and Sadducees, as well as the death and resurrection of their Messiah.

⁷ Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Jesus Taught* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 129.

Scripture must have been central in this teaching, as it was in Jesus' ministry. These men grew up in a Jewish community and took reading and teaching the Law seriously. Jesus came to complete the Law, not remove it, and that completion was the redemptive power of the Gospel. The place of Scripture in gatherings was strong; with fresh experience of the Holy Spirit, a new experience of Scripture would open and be expressed with excitement, joy, and maybe some debate. The teachings of Jesus and Jewish scripture kept the early church avoiding pitfalls that came further down the line.

The second element of this verse is "the fellowship" (τῇ κοινωνίᾳ). The word expresses acts of partaking, sharing and demonstrating intimate participation with close communion in relationship.⁸ The root word, *koina*, means "in common," the Greek word for intimate bonding of Christians in close community and love. This is the only use in Acts; it is used nineteen times in the New Testament. The close intimacy projected from this word is the type of closeness that takes place in marriage.⁹ It has strong overtones of material support in the giving of alms. It is uncertain if this term refers to close mutual relationships with believers or sharing material resources with the poor or a combination of both.¹⁰ Regardless, it shows a very close mutual association. Bock explains the spirit of the text says "there is a real sense of connection to, between, and for each other."¹¹

⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 150.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Martin M. Culy and Mikeal Carl Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 46.

¹¹ Bock, *Acts*, 150.

Once again, this fellowship was not in any way perceived as a meeting or a weekly addition to a busy schedule. It was a lifestyle change that re-directed priorities in all areas of life. Fellowship took on a new family and community so to speak, one that fulfilled the hope of the Messiah and new Kingdom. If Jesus was the center of this fellowship, then His words were of extreme importance. Brothers and sisters in this community were not to be in need if it could be helped.

This is in sharp contrast to the understanding of church today, where members come and sit in Bible studies and services. It was a dynamic relationship of meeting practical needs with material giving and a caring, personal touch. They were involved in each other's lives and seemed to open up to close association in a short time. The Holy Spirit gave them the ability to think of each other's needs as more important than their own and express it in a sincere, practical demonstration of giving and sharing. The new community had an intimate closeness that would not allow any differences (social status, ethnic, economic, background) to get in the way of their hope together. They were set on making this work a reality, and the words of Jesus were the basis for this intimacy.

The third element of the new community is “the breaking of the bread” (τῆ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου). “Breaking” means a breaking off, and is used in reference to meals (Acts 2:46; 20:7, 11, 27:35). The term “breaking of bread” only appears two times in the New Testament, here, in Acts 2 and Luke 24:35. The reference in Luke refers to table fellowship. Table fellowship is more than just eating a meal, but again, a relational concept of closeness. Jesus shared table fellowship with “sinners” symbolizing His reaching out relationally to them (Lk 15:1) in the act of redemption. Reaching out was a hallmark of the incarnation, God becoming flesh and dwelling among humanity.

Table fellowship was an important part of the ministry of Jesus. Sharing a meal was sharing a personal connection. The new church may have eaten at common tables like the Spartans, as a family.¹² Deciding if this characterizes the Lord's Supper is difficult as the early church celebrated it as part of a larger meal.¹³ By any respect, the early church ate meals together often, as did Jesus with his followers; the Lord's Supper in communion was probably included more than not.¹⁴

Table fellowship, modeled by Jesus with sinners, was continued by the early church.¹⁵ Meals were not rushed, but a time for intimate interaction and blessing with families, and now, the new family, the Church. Conversations and connection around food and blessing were the norm. The early church seemed to make these meal times a priority and relished the event. It seems as they broke bread together, they discussed the issues of the day and processed the teaching they received.¹⁶ These meals were opportunities for getting to know other newfound believers, with expressions of sharing and care. This "program" of the early church is key to understanding the blessing and intimacy they had, demonstrated by Jesus in His care to eat with sinners (Luke 15:1, 2).

¹² Matthew Henry and David Brian Winter, *Matthew Henry's Commentary: Acts to Revelation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), 29.

¹³ Fritz Rogers and Cleon L. Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 267.

¹⁴ C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 163-65.

¹⁵ Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus, a New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 102.

¹⁶ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Exeter, 1983), 145.

The word “prayer” and term “the prayers” (ταις προσευχαις) in the New Testament must be taken in context to determine if it is private devotions or corporate worship. This noun (προσευχαις) appears twelve times in Luke-Acts, while the verb “pray” appears thirty-four times in Luke-Acts. Luke seems to make a point of the community in prayer. This is a demonstration of a group seeking God and His direction as contrasted to those who are motivated by intuition or feelings.

An article with the plural may indicate that some of the prayers were prepared, set prayers. The early church may have been mixed with both set and spontaneous prayers.¹⁷ This is likely because “set” prayers were used in Jerusalem in the Temple. Jesus taught his disciples the Lord’s Prayer, which was a set prayer. Regardless of whether the Church prayed set, prepared or spontaneous prayers, it is clear the early church systematically and regularly prayed together. Large sections of time were just times to pray. They had hours of prayer set in the Temple and in homes. These four areas or elements of instruction, fellowship, sharing meals and worship were all strong characteristics of this Church. They demonstrate how the early church lived and operated corporately.

Awe or fear (φοβος) came upon every soul (ψυχη). εγινετο as a verb is imperfect and used twice in this verse. ψυχη (soul) is also used in Acts 2:41 to refer to people. Fear (φοβος) is respectful, careful, somewhat nervous attention to what occurs in this new group. It is seen after the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:55); and Sceva’s sons (Acts 19:17). Respect and attention seem to be from inside and outside the community. This word is one of respect and reverence for authority and dignity as

¹⁷ Bock, *Acts*, 151.

opposed to the negative aspect of terror. There is variance in manuscripts as to the end of this verse, with some including a more emphatic reading of “fear on every soul.”¹⁸

“Signs and wonders” are mentioned as characteristic of this community. It was previously mentioned in Acts 2:19. The term “wonder” τερατα appears only sixteen times in the New Testament (nine in Acts) while the term “signs” σημεια appears seventy-seven times in the New Testament (thirteen in Acts). The two terms are joined together (τερατα και σημεια) sixteen times in the New Testament, nine times in Acts. The term “wonders” is only paired with “signs” in Acts. Mikeal Parsons writes this is a doublet, two or more synonymous words joined to express a single idea. This doublet emphasizes a supernatural aspect of the occurrence.¹⁹ In Jewish context, the reader sees a parallel to God’s miracle of creation and the signs of Moses in Exodus.²⁰ “Wonder” is associated with excitement of surprise, anticipating future expectation. “Sign” is a signal something is designated or distinguished to show what it indicates; Christ’s miracles point to His Deity. These signs and wonders indicate the apostles had divine authority.

In Acts 3:1-10, these “signs and wonders” are seen with the healing of the lame man and following explanation by the leadership of the early church. This understandably shows similarities to the pattern used by Luke in his Gospel.²¹ This is a demonstration that the miracles of Jesus are being carried on by the Apostles. Luke-Acts is making a clear point that the wonders of God are shown through Jesus, and then by the Apostles.

¹⁸ Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 115.

²¹ *Ibid.*

“All those who believed” (Acts 2:45-46) were those who received the message of Peter’s sermon. This phrase describes members of the new church. They are here called “believers” which literally means, “persuaded or fully convinced.” This shows the real unity among these new followers of Christ. This term is disputed in translation, but “together” or “in the same place” seems to be the spirit of the verse.²²

Koinia comes up again as they held all “in common.” It occurs fourteen times in the New Testament, but only appears four times with this meaning. The other meaning is to be unclean. The believers met each other’s material needs with love and compassion that were part of the ministry of Jesus. There is a real depth of relationship demonstrated here, not just church attendance and bible study; a generous spirit is present. Sharing possessions is not a requirement, but a compassionate response to individual need within the fellowship. It seems voluntary.

Bruce writes, “Within the community there was a spirit of rejoicing and generosity; outside they enjoyed great popular good-will.”²³ The culture around the church held generosity in high esteem, making the church an attractive group to be a part. Giving to each other freely was also a reflection of the soon expected return of Jesus, as they had real motivation of concern for those in fellowship. Jesus’ teaching against storing up treasures may have been emphasized in the early church. This makes sense in regards to the gifts of Barnabas, and later the episode of discipline of Ananias and Sapphira with their deceitful gift in Acts 5. Barnabas gave freely of his stewardship

²² Ibid., 153.

²³ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 81.

throughout Scripture, with his possessions, time and energy. Barnabas was held in high esteem and recognized for giving.

Jews in Jerusalem kept regular attendance at the temple, so it is not unusual that they met there daily. It may be recorded to demonstrate their faithfulness and tie to the temple. They met in the temple, prayed in the temple and saw themselves as Jews. This gave them increased credibility as a new group.

The breaking of bread referred to in Acts 2:46 is one of sharing meals; acts extending fellowship beyond the temple walls into homes. The phrase μετελάμβανον τροφῆς ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ ἀφελότητι καρδίας, may mean various homes. These regular meals were described as times “glad and generous.” These were regular meals, not necessarily Jewish holidays, just the fellowship gathering, enjoying being together. This was joined with a singleness of heart ἀφελότητι καρδίας.

As a result of their newfound and sincere faith, joy and community developed quickly. The byproduct of the community was they received “favor with all the people.” The outside people looked with respect and grace upon the new church. This favor or grace was inviting, and as a result their fellowship attracted outsiders to come and see about this new movement.

The last part of the verse is “and the Lord added converts daily in that place.” The Lord made the converts. Daily people were brought into the new community. This is a sign of a healthy church. This is not an activity, but a byproduct of positive relationships and a caring community. This community is not an activity, but a natural lifestyle of love. The good reputation had a degree of impact on their witness (Acts 1:8).

Elements of Evaluation Based on Acts 2:42-47

There are many limitations to evaluation of a ministry in light of a passage. There are vast differences in time and culture. Realistically, a teenager in America would probably not relate to the authority of that day. Young people had little choice but to follow authority. Transportation and media have created a different world.

The social setting of teenagers in America can be alarming. Newman expresses feelings of shock in her book, *Rampage*. Violence in close-knit communities is becoming all too common. Others, like Males, writes in his books, *Framing Youth* and *Scapegoat Generation*, that youth today are no worse than any generation, in fact much better statistically. Hines, in his book, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, writes that teenagers are just a social invention shaped by the needs of American culture in the twentieth century.²⁴ The wide differences in the two cultures make it difficult to compare the culture of today with the culture of the Jewish community in the early church.

God has provided this picture of the early church in Acts for a reason. It seems reasonable to see the elements of this early church and use them as a filter or checklist of sorts to discern areas of strength and weakness in a ministry. Some conclusions about how the early church functioned would be of benefit to us today.

The Basic Elements of the Ministry of Acts 2:42-47

As stated previously, the conjunction “the” (τῆ) points to the main elements of the early Jerusalem church. The elements, the teaching of the apostles (instruction), sharing of *Koinineia* (fellowship), breaking of bread together (expression) and the prayers

²⁴ Hines, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, 4.

(worship and sacraments) can be used as a filter today. These elements included table fellowship and community outreach. These elements demonstrate the spirit and words of this passage and distinctly give a guide to evaluate present day ministry in light of scripture. LaBar writes these areas are the programs of the church.²⁵

A youth ministry could be evaluated by comparisons to other youth ministries or secular models. Many do this, but Scripture is the guide for theology and methods. Scripture is the message book and method book. There seem to be a few filters to observe from this dynamic passage. These elements seem to be singular in purpose. Instruction (προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ), learning the Apostles' teaching, is surely one.

The early church invested a great deal of time in listening and learning from the Apostles who walked with Jesus. These teaching are recorded in Scripture. Evaluation would be some of the following, time set aside to teach youth, biblical teaching as opposed to teaching based on feelings or personal agenda, effectively communicating the message clearly, and cultural relevance to practical needs of this generation, with issues they face regularly.²⁶ Instruction should be age appropriate and culturally relevant.

Another element of a filter is worship. Worship should celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Time should be set aside for worship. Worship music singing needs to be personal interaction with the Living God. Young people need to praise God and not just socialize. There seemed to be no generational separation in Acts 2; churches should determine if ministry should be inter-generational in worship.

²⁵ LeBar, *Focus on People in Church Education*, 35-44.

²⁶ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (London: SPCK, 2006), 16.

Koinia (κοινωνία) or the community relationship is a primary element of the early church. Ministry experience is sharing common recognition of needs and addresses strategies of meeting them. A spirit of compassion and acceptance must be reflected in the fellowship. There is a “feel” or emotional element here in Acts 2 that cannot be ignored; churches must ask if that ‘feel’ element is reflected in today’s gatherings.

Hersch researched her book on youth just a few miles from The Falls Church and described this generation as *A Tribe Apart*, a group who feel alienated from society and must bond together for survival. She writes, “America’s own adolescents have become strangers. They are a tribe apart, remote, mysterious, vaguely threatening.”²⁷

The evangelism of Acts 2:47 was a natural byproduct of the fellowship gathering. “The Lord added to their number daily those who were finding salvation.” There is not a door-to-door knocking campaign in Acts 2, but a caring community that attracts seeking, searching and possibly hurting people to “come and see.”

Another area is one of attitude. The devotion of the early disciples was noted in Acts 2:42. Churches can use the example of the early disciples to determine if the same attitude is present. Youth should be devoted to one another and the Church. They should share meals with gladness and humility and have a strong respect and fear of God.

The issue of leadership is also to be evaluated, as it affects all areas. The leaders of Acts 2 were the Apostles who had walked with Jesus. In a youth ministry it is primary that leaders be close to Jesus through prayer and Scripture. Youth rarely grow more than leadership does. The leadership cannot impart what they do not possess; they cannot give what they do not have. So a clear addressing of the leadership in all areas is important in

²⁷ Hersch, *Tribe Apart*, 14.

any evaluation of a youth ministry. Leaders need to be mature enough to spiritually and socially give to the youth they are serving, have diverse gifts and personalities and attempt to be disciples themselves, before trying to disciple others.

Healthy Relationships - Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 2

Young people have built up protective walls to guard from the bombardments of culture. Alissa Quart writes in her eye-opening book, *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*, “In 1989, corporations spent about 600 million on marketing to kids. In 1999, they spent twenty times that amount.”²⁸ Quart goes on to write that the average ten-year old has memorized from three to four hundred brands and 92 percent of kids request brand specific products.²⁹ They are hit with agenda driven messages every waking hour. Product placement in media is a science now and youth are the target.

With multiple avenues of access to communication increasing with Facebook, texting, cell phones and other methods, email is now old fashioned. Teenagers have so many different ways to communicate that it hinders communication. Since teens use so many words to converse, communication is cheaper and means less. Wisdom can be determined by what people choose not to embrace. Sometimes what is thrown out shows more wisdom than what is kept. The Church must go to the basics of faith and see the relational methods demonstrated in Scripture.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul’s intimacy and love for the Philippians is seen as he wrote from prison. To the Corinthian church, Paul expresses care as he deals with

²⁸ Alissa Quart, *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Pub, 2003), 51.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

the many spiritual and relational issues that were affecting this young gifted church. In Thessalonians Paul specifically and clearly spells out how he functioned as a missionary, unlike any of his other recorded letters. It is one of the clearest pictures of the methodology of the apostle Paul written in Scripture. Paul shows priority on relationships in beginning the church and personally interacted with the new converts. I Thessalonians 2 provides strong insight into relationships and methods employed to build a sustainable ministry. I Thessalonians 1-3 is devoted to Paul's relationship with the church.³⁰

During his second missionary journey, the apostle Paul, Timothy and Silas founded the church at Thessalonica. In Acts 16, Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man begging for help. He rounded up his team and went to Philippi where they experienced a great deal of trouble. They moved west about a hundred miles on the Egnatian highway to Thessalonica. Paul invested his time with the church. Luke records his perspective.

The City: Thessalonica

Thessalonica, today known as Salonica, was the most populated city in Macedonia during the ministry of Paul. At one time it was called Therme, named after the hot springs close by and its strategic location on the Thermaic Gulf. The Romans built a military highway, the *Via Egnatia*, from Alpollonia to Thessalonica. The highway was later extended to Philippi and beyond, making Macedonia a base for Roman expansion.

Thessalonica was founded by Cassander, who served as an officer of Alexander the Great. He named the city after his wife, who was Alexander's step-sister. When Alexander died in 323 BC Cassander gained control of Greece. The Romans conquered

³⁰ John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 183.

Macedonia in 167 BC and made Thessalonica capital. In 146 BC, Rome merged four republics into a single province making Thessalonica the capitol.³¹ Augustus made Macedonia a senatorial province in 27 BC.³² Thessalonica, unlike most cities during New Testament times, was free to administer its own municipal affairs.

Thessalonica existed as a free city, while Philippi was simply a colony.³³ As a result, no Roman garrison was quartered in Philippi and the city was entirely self-governed.³⁴ It should be noted that in Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten with rods, while in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas were able to leave quietly.

The Beginnings of the Church

Paul sailed across the Aegean Sea from Asia Minor in 50 AD with Luke, Silvanus and Timothy. After planting a church in Philippi, the three left Luke and continued on to Thessalonica. According to Romans 1:16, they began by preaching in the synagogue “to the Jew first” for three weeks, pointing out from Old Testament passages that Jesus was the coming Messiah. Most notably among the Jews were the God Fearers, gentiles who were loosely associated to the Jews. Paul was expelled from the synagogue after three weeks, and began a community of Christians, the Thessalonians Church. Paul’s team taught the young church the basics of life in Christ by living among them.

³¹ D.E.H. Whiteley, *Thessalonians in the Revised Standard Version* (London: Oxford, 1969), 1.

³² Bruce Manning Metzger, David Allan Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), XX.

³³ Merrill Frederick Unger, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), 229.

³⁴ A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 96.

Paul's typical evangelistic plan constituted teaching in the synagogue and explaining Scriptures to the Jews. As written in Acts 17:2-3, "And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." Some Jews were persuaded and joined Paul's group of Christians. Among those converted were God-fearing Greeks and some of the leading women of the city. Some of the Jews from the synagogue formed a mob with some townspeople and Paul and Silas were forced to leave the city by night.

One of Paul's earliest letters may be 1 Thessalonians, depending on the dating of Galatians. The letter to the Christian church in Thessalonians was probably written in 50 AD. It shows Paul and his associates visited the city and proclaimed the good news right after leaving Philippi. It records that Paul was treated "shamefully" in Philippi (1 Thessalonians 2:2). After leaving Thessalonica, Paul then went to Athens and was unable to return. Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians because he was unable to return.

Acts 16:6-18:5 parallels the account of Thessalonians and provides a historical framework for the letter. Paul refers to the turmoil and difficulty he encountered on his missionary journey in the letter. Rumor spread in town of Paul's teaching of Jesus as a King, and charges of sedition were brought to civil authorities against Paul. He had to leave the city quietly. Paul wrote the letters to encourage and support his new church and express his strong feelings for them. The makeup of the church included some Jews, but mostly gentile converts, some moving from outright paganism.³⁵ Historians speculate that some converts to Christianity included women of good families and wives of leading

³⁵ Metzger, Hubbard, and Barker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, xxii.

citizens. Timothy brought back a good report of the Thessalonians, which encouraged Paul and his team. Eschatology was a major theme of the letter, but not discussed in chapter two. In chapter one, Paul begins the letter with continual thanksgiving (εὐχαριστοῦμεν) to God for the Thessalonians and their fresh, new faith. In chapter two, Paul describes the meaningful relationships he developed with members of the church.

Some historians speculate Paul stayed in the city only a short period of time, possibly three weeks. It was not Paul's custom to take up residence in any city. Biblical scholars have disagreed on the length of Paul's stay in the city. E. F. Harrison writes Paul received financial aid from Phillipi more than once, indicating a longer period of residence.³⁶ Though the length of his stay cannot be known, its affect can be seen from this letter. Warren Wiersbe writes, "If Paul were there only three weeks, he certainly taught the new Christians a great deal of basic Bible doctrine. As we study the two letters, we discover that almost every major doctrine of the Christian faith is mentioned."³⁷

Paul had serious detractors in Thessalonica. "A careful study of Paul's defense shows that the slander by means of which his enemies were trying to undermine the influence of his message amounted to this: 'Paul and his associates are deluded individuals who for selfish reasons and with trickery are trying to exploit the people.'³⁸ Detractors reasoned that if they succeeded in building distrust with the messengers, the message would fall apart. Throughout the letter, Paul addresses the issues of detractors.

³⁶ Everett Falconer Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1966), 246.

³⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Ready* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1979), 12-13.

³⁸ William Hendriksen and Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 59-60.

A close examination of the Greek words and phrases in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 give insight into the style and depth of the relationship he had with the members of the church. The following notes are important examples that show the relationship and methodology of Paul and Associates. In verse 1 “you know brothers” (γὰρ Αὐτοὶ οἴδατε, ἀδελφοί) means to perceive; to have seen; to fully know. The relationship was experienced and cannot be denied by those who experienced it. They knew that the visit from Paul and the team had a lasting effect. They saw it, felt it and experienced it. The relationship was a clear reality to them.

The γὰρ links the narration with the exordium of 1:2. It transitions chapter one to chapter two with the purpose of the visit,³⁹ and reflects good rhetorical practice.⁴⁰ Charles Wanamaker writes this is typical of parenetic-style, which seeks to emphasize what is already known and understood. In referring to 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Wanamaker writes, “As far as Paul was concerned, his apostolic manner of life was lived for the sake of his converts and was totally keeping with the message that he had declared to the Thessalonians. In fact it was part of the gospel preaching itself.”⁴¹ Wanamaker continues:

The combination of moral exhortation and personal example that Paul gave the Thessalonians while he was with them and how he reminds them of in his absence corresponds to the best standards in moral education in the Greco-Roman world. Seneca, the Stoic philosopher who was a contemporary of Paul, recommended that people seek out for moral direction ‘men who teach by their lives, who tell us what we should avoid, and then are never caught doing that which they have

³⁹ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 91.

⁴⁰ Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 77.

⁴¹ Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 80.

ordered us to avoid.’ This is precisely the approach of Paul to the resocialization of the Thessalonians into the Christian way of life according to 2:9-12.⁴²

Milligan points out that foundational to this ministry is the repetitive statement building on the experience they had together. This appeals to the Thessalonians’ own experience. He writes, “The somewhat awkward repetition of γὰρ Αὐτοὶ οἶδατε brings out strongly the writers desire to carry their readers along with them.”⁴³

The phrase “not a failure” (οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν, vs 1) means not empty, not futile. It was not an empty-handed visit, but produced tangible results. Moore in the *New Century Bible Commentary Series* writes “vain” (*kenos*) has two meanings in the Greek New Testament. One means “void,” “empty” or “a mere nothing;” the other “ineffective,” “without result.” Both apply here. Elsewhere in the New Testament, Paul uses *kenos* to mean fruitless or worthless (1 Corinthians 15:10, 14, 58; Galatians 2:2; Ephesians 5:6; Col 2:8).⁴⁴ Hendrickson notes this says to the people and detractors, “Far from aiming to take something away from you, we brought you something.”⁴⁵ This communicates the high value Paul placed on people. He saw time with them as substantive.

The Thessalonian church knew there were hardships and challenges for Paul. However, Paul dared to proclaim the Gospel boldly regardless of consequences. Paul Ellingworth writes the word “opposition (v. 2)” is a term used for an athletic contest.⁴⁶

⁴² Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 80.

⁴³ George Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London: Macmillan, 1908), 16.

⁴⁴ Arthur L. Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (London: Nelson, 1969), 33.

⁴⁵ Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 60.

⁴⁶ Paul Ellingworth and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 21.

Milligan agrees this is one of Paul's sport metaphors. He writes this verse is "derived from the athletic ground where life is compared to the Olympic festival in which God has given us the opportunity of showing of what stuff we are made."⁴⁷ Paul felt the challenges were like a contest and emphasized he had some victory against strong odds. The word courage here refers "to have strong heart" or "be strong in our insides."⁴⁸

Paul did not use a "hook," any impure motive, nor did he attempt to use any form of deceit to convince the Thessalonians of the Gospel's validity (v. 3). The word indicates a form of "stealth," indicating he did not use any sort of trick to "hook" or "lure" them. The Greek indicates a word like "bait." There was nothing hidden or disguised. The message was strong and pure, without error; there was no need to be veiled or disguised in anyway. Milligan states the work was for the direct benefit of those addressed, with no selfish end in mind.⁴⁹ This is in contrast with false teachers who are not only "deceivers, but deceived," as stated in 2 Timothy 3:13. Paul and his group knew whom they had believed, according to 2 Timothy 1:12. Moore writes that Paul maintains that the message was free from three different impurities: error, uncleanness and guile.⁵⁰

Verse 4 said that Paul was "approved" (δεδοκιμάσμεθα - meaning to test, to be examined). Paul and the team were approved by God, tested and examined, both internally and externally. They were to be trusted, as approved messengers.

⁴⁷ Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 17.

⁴⁸ Ellingworth and Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians*, 22.

⁴⁹ Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 16.

⁵⁰ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 34.

The word δοκιμάζοντι (vs 4) means proved and analyzed. The Greek indicates “passing as fit for election to a public office.”⁵¹ Καρδίας, according to Milligan, has a specific meaning: “Biblical usage is focused in the personal life, the centre of all, intellectual as well as emotional, that goes up to make up the moral character, and is thus equivalent to the inner, hidden man known to God alone.”⁵² Paul, Timothy and Silvanus were analyzed by God inside and out, their hearts examined, found pure and worthy. The word “heart” (καρδίας) means mind, spirit, heart; the soul.

Moore writes the Old Testament meaning for “heart” was inner man in contrast to an outward feature of man (Dt 30:14; Ezek 3:10), moral character, the seat of a man’s emotions.⁵³ Hendrickson writes, “The human eye cannot discern the inner motive of his fellowman, whether good or bad; hence, Paul as it were appeals to God’s omniscience.”⁵⁴

The Greek word λόγῳ κολακείας (vs 5) means: No words of flattery, never flattering speech; never pretense or pretext. During this period, rhetoricians sought to gain advantage of others by seeking influence with the use of flattery.⁵⁵ Paul maintained his message was free from impurities (vs 3); he now lists three forms of corruption from which his ministry was free: flattery, greed and self-seeking.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 18.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵³ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 35.

⁵⁴ Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 63.

⁵⁵ Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 19.

⁵⁶ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 37.

Verse 6 indicates the team had no sense of attempting to please men. They did not seek honor or approval from people, but God alone. Paul and his team were not hindered in word or deed to teach the truth. The phrase “being able to be with weight,” (δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι – vs 7) means they had the weight or ability to assert authority as Apostles. Paul indicates he had the power to demand respect, the heaviness of spiritual authority, but chose not to use it, but came in gentleness. Paul could have been “the heavy,” but he came in love. Hendrickson affirms the right translation of νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν (vs 7) is “gentle in the midst of you” as opposed to infants or “babes in the midst of you.” He comments referring to “gentle”:

This is the correct word, not *infants*, though that has considerable textual support. But the change from gentle to infants (the difference is just one letter in the original: νήπιοι to ἡπιοι) may have risen from the fact that *gentile* is rare (used only in the NT only here and 2 Tim.2:24. This is better than to say (with those who favor the reading *infants*) that the first letter of νήπιοι was omitted by scribal error because the same letter ends the preceding word. After all, the context very definitely argues for *gentle*: *gentle* stands over “in weight;” it also matches the description which immediately follows: ‘as when a nurse cherishes her own children.’⁵⁷

Moore argues “gentle” is preferable for the same reasons; writing it mixes metaphors.⁵⁸

When describing this relationship, the apostle uses the terms “in the midst of you” or “among you.” It is a reminder of the Lord as He served in Table Fellowship with sinners.

It can be interpreted as “one of yourselves, with a hint at the absence of all authority.”⁵⁹

Paul invested time with people, not just speaking from upfront and removing himself. He

⁵⁷ Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 64.

⁵⁸ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 38.

⁵⁹ John Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in 1 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1961), 49.

was around them or would not have been able to write this to them. He lived among them for a time and invested in them with the time he had.

Understanding the Greek meaning of warmth is helpful in grasping the full meaning of verse 7. Lineberry expresses the word gentle instead of infants. He writes they became gentle, as God enabled them to be gentle people.⁶⁰ He describes the word cherish as “to keep warm” and writes it is only used twice in the New Testament, here and Ephesians 5:29.⁶¹ Care is expressed here as the love and tenderness of a mother breastfeeding her infant. *Trophos* (τροφὸς) occurs only once in the entire New Testament. In the Old Testament, *yanaq* is a similar verb meaning “to nurse, suckle.” As well as nursing an infant, it can refer to metaphorical contexts. *Yanaq* can signify the inhabitants of Jerusalem who will “nurse” at the “breast” of nations and rulers, showing God’s care of His people among the nations, as recorded in Isaiah 60:16.⁶² The metaphor is also found in Isaiah 66:11-12; the people of Yahweh who will nurse at Zion’s breasts, indicating the children of Israel will be enriched and nourished by God’s renewal.⁶³

The word cherish (θάλπη) indicates a mother’s tender care of her child that came from her own self. Gaventa writes in *Our Mother Saint Paul* that wet-nurses were quite common for all social classes in the time of Paul. Even slave women had wet nurses.⁶⁴

Comparing the apostles with a nurse invoked an image of loving concern. Paul enhances

⁶⁰ Linbertt, *Vital Word Studies in I Thessalonians*, 33, 48.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶² Stephen D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 680.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2007), 27.

this image by specifying the nurse is “caring for her own children.” However, comparing the connection between a nurse and her charges, to a nurse and her children seems to mean that the later would have a warmer, more intense relationship. Verse 8 unpacks what is implicit in the nurse metaphor: the apostles regard the Thessalonians as so dear, they share with them their very selves, their lives. Moore describes this as Paul being a “feeder,” or more specifically milk feeding converts that need milk (1 Corinthians 3:1).⁶⁵

In Numbers 11:12, Moses wails to God, “Did I conceive this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a suckling child,’ to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors?” Paul may have been aware of this verse, yet is more positive in his approach to the care of his babies. Moses seems a little put off by the responsibility, but Paul sees this nursing as a real blessing that he cherishes.

The word ὀμειρόμενοι (v. 8) means having a deep, earnest, sincere affection for them. This exhibits genuine affection and desire for the best for the Thessalonians. Moore states this phrase has been found on a grave describing the parents’ sad yearning for their child, indicating very, deep affection.⁶⁶ A term of endearment used only here in the New Testament is *Homeiromenoi*, from *homeiromai* meaning to desire, long for, or yearn after. The present tense shows continual, perpetual action meaning Paul and his associates continually longed for the believers in Thessalonica.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 38.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in 1 Thessalonians*, 49-50.

Verse 8 indicates Paul and his team were happy to give or share their message and lives. The word “impart” (μεταδοῦναι) means to share part of oneself. It means “to give,” “share of,” or “to share life.” The word “impart” means more than just passing on information, but sharing the information to the other. It is used in Romans 1:11, “For I long to see you, to impart a spiritual gift to you.” Moore writes that this compound verb introduces the idea of “mutuality into the giving.”⁶⁸ The imperfect tense speaks of continual action, “we kept on being well pleased.”⁶⁹

Paul and the apostles opened themselves in relationship, not just a message. Moore writes that the word “soul” or “selves” here means “entire being.”⁷⁰ Ellingsworth in his *Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Thessalonians* writes, “It is difficult in some languages to speak of ‘sharing our own lives with you.’ Some interpret this phrase as ‘willingness to die for you,’ and others as ‘doing everything that we possibly could to help you.’”⁷¹ This was the method Paul used to connect with vulnerable intimacy.

Verse 9 is a repetitive call to remembrance. Paul is calling the Thessalonians to remember Paul’s actions and teaching when he lived in Thessalonica. During this period, it was custom for pious Jews to learn a trade and expected that Pharisees should be able to maintain themselves. Acts 18:3 describes Paul as a “tent-maker,” which is how he also labored in Corinth. It was more like a leather worker. He was occupied all the time.⁷²

⁶⁸ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 39.

⁶⁹ Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in 1 Thessalonians*, 50.

⁷⁰ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 39.

⁷¹ Ellingsworth and Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians*, 30.

⁷² Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 39.

The Greek word μάρτυρες in verse 8 refers to witnesses. The “you” is emphatic, contrasting with the detractor’s suggestion that it was a false experience. It is in plural form, “you, all of you,” the believers in the church.⁷³ This witness was a “don’t tell me, show me” lifestyle. The three adverbs ὡς ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῶν in verse 10 (devoutly, righteously and blamelessly), provide a summary of Christ-like behavior, are similar in meaning, with no distinction between them.⁷⁴ These words may have had the same meaning in Paul’s mind to emphasize their positive behavior.

Just as nursing is from the mother, care is from the biological father. “There is an appropriate change from the image of a mother to that of a father; the reference not being here to the tenderness of the love, but to its manifestation in instruction and education.”⁷⁵ Not only was he loving and warm like a mother nursing, but instructive and direct like a father preparing his child for life (v. 11). In Roman families the image of a father was usually harsh and severe. The Greek counterpart was very different, more fueled with reason than beatings.⁷⁶ In Paul’s ministry, there were private and public teachings.

Lineberry writes the word order for “*as you know*,” means it must be taken to the fullest extent, “*you know absolutely*.”⁷⁷ The phrase “each one of you” is a causal introductory particle meaning “each one of you separately” or “each one of you

⁷³ Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in I Thessalonians*, 52.

⁷⁴ Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 40.

⁷⁵ C. J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, with a Revised Translation* (Boston: WH Halliday, 1876), 33.

⁷⁶ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, 2002), 134-135.

⁷⁷ Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in I Thessalonians*, 53.

personally.”⁷⁸ He goes on to write Paul was not satisfied with giving the message to a general group or the public at large but was sufficiently interested in personal individuals to communicate one-on-one in conversations that were private.⁷⁹ Paul knew each of the Thessalonians and probably had individual interactions with each of them.

“Encouraging” (v. 12) is a common word with Paul, used ten times in these epistles, with a double meaning of “exhortation” and “comfort.”⁸⁰ This was the form and content of the instruction that Paul gave.⁸¹ *Parakalountes*, from *parakaleo*, a compound of *para* and *kaleo*, means to call to one’s side to console and strengthen.⁸² Paul and his associates came alongside as a father coaching his child in life lessons. The encouraging was done with comfort, testifying was a charge to live worthy of Christ.

Psychosocial Foundation for Healthy Community

Looking at healthy community, imagery of the healthy family can be seen. The biblical writers note this in loving and caring parent child relationships. Paul uses these pictures of healthy families to describe the goals of ministry.

⁷⁸ Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in I Thessalonians*, 53.

⁷⁹ Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in I Thessalonians*, 54.

⁸⁰ Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 25.

⁸¹ Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 135.

⁸² Lineberry, *Vital Word Studies in I Thessalonians*, 45.

Intimate Personal Relationship/Maternal Imagery: Like a Nurse with Infants

Paul's familial imagery in this passage "makes it one of the most moving passages of his letters."⁸³ It reminds readers of his maternal image in Galatians 4:19, "My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you." This mother imagery is surprising considering that this team is probably comprised of men. Paul, Timothy and Silas are like "mothers" to the churches they founded. Not just "mothers," but "nursing mothers." For a man in Roman society to use this imagery shows a great deal of security in the relationship between himself and his audience.

Paul uses this maternal imagery in Romans 8:22, when he refers again to childbirth, "the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies." He does the same in scolding the Corinthian church: "I could not speak to you as spiritual people but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready to have solid food (1 Corinthians 3:1)."

This maternal language and metaphors are different from paternal words and images. Paul does not use them interchangeably. Gaventa writes, "When Paul speaks in unambiguously paternal language, he does so with reference to the origin of faith in the life of a person or group (1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:11; Philemon 10). Maternal imagery serves a different function, one more concerned with the nurture and

⁸³ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1998), 31.

growth of believers than with the point at which they were called into faith.”⁸⁴ It seems Paul uses paternal for conversion teaching and maternal for growth teaching.

Gaventa responds that Paul’s use of these words was a way of cultivating family relationships among Christians. The church belonged to the same family, and to be a child of the apostle is to be connected to him and other brothers and sisters. She writes, “When Paul speaks of himself as a mother, he makes himself vulnerable.”⁸⁵ In the relationship, Paul intimately opened his heart and life and shown himself to potential disciples. He was willing to risk rejection and any failure of ministry to show his true desire. This was obviously an important part in his method to develop relationships.

Most would not describe Paul as a “gentle” apostle. It is not the first word thought of when describing a man who wrote much of the New Testament, words such as “bold,” “determined,” “zealous,” but not usually “gentle.” Paul’s imagery as a nursing mother may have been to describe himself as a “feeder.” He is a gentle feeder who nurtured his church with sustaining milk to help them develop spiritually. He gave that teaching, or milk, from himself. It was internalized and then shared among other believers.

It seems the role of a nurse in that culture, involved not only affection, but portrayed one who did household chores, with some form of the exercise of authority and supervision in the household at times.⁸⁶ Paul may have used this imagery to communicate his service to them as well as his intimate care. These images are loaded with meaning that would not have been missed by a culture that took the written word as important.

⁸⁴ Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 33.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 23.

The Paternal Relationship: Father-Son

The paternal relationship of father-son is expressed here. Paul is the parent of the church; they are the children. “For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 2:11).” He desired they experience the reality and knowledge of Christ.

Paul uses the parent-child relationship in Scripture many other times. He addresses the churches of Corinth (1 Cor 4; 2 Cor 6:13) and Galatia (Gal 4:19) as his “children.” He sees himself as having birthed them (1 Cor 4:15; Philemon 10). Timothy, Titus and Philemon are addressed as “my child” 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:1; Philemon 1; or “my beloved child” (1 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 1:2), or “my true child” (1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4).

That relationship was the educational plan and process. A Jewish father had the responsibility to teach his son. According to the Talmud, the father was expected to circumcise his son, teach him the law and develop the boy in a trade. If necessary, the father was to do all this harshly.⁸⁷ According to Willis Deboer, in the *Imitation of Paul*,

The application of the father-son relationship to that of teachers and their pupils was both of long standing and general in the ancient world. Paul’s usage, however, is best accounted for in terms of the world immediately at hand to him. Rabbinical Judaism had the saying: ‘He who teaches the son of one of his neighbors the Torah, scripture ascribes it to him as if he begotten him.’ In fact, the thoughts run so parallel, that when Paul substitutes for the Torah the gospel as the means by which the new life was awakened, he must be suspected of Christianizing a Jewish figure of speech.⁸⁸

Paul states he served the church, in the role of the serving father, when he could have expected or claimed respect and honor like an apostle (1 Thessalonians 2:6). It is

⁸⁷ Whiteley, *Thessalonians in the Revised Standard Version*, 44.

⁸⁸ Willis De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Kampen, Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1962), 145.

important to see Paul did not come to give messages or run a program but transform lives with the Gospel. He knew it had to be done individually and collectively, but most of all by sharing his life with the people.

In the book, *Starting Right*, Clark describes the journey of adolescence with an illustration of a tightrope. In the ages before eleven, the child is directed in a strong way by parents, indicating going up the stable ladder to the tightrope, and then at around eleven the child is expected to step out into early adolescence (ages eleven to twelve), and walk the tightrope through mid-adolescence (ages thirteen to fourteen) and passing through late adolescence (ages seventeen to nineteen) into adulthood. Clark's deep concern is that in this process, the teenager is not prepared for the unstableness of the tightrope and needs a secure safety net underneath to catch the missteps and help the adolescent survive until the adult years. The answer is to provide several mentors for the teenager that can help him or her navigate the tightrope.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence;" and Dean, Clark, and Rahn, *Starting Right*, 50.

CHAPTER 5

IMPARTATION AND DISCIPLESHIP: THE METHODOLOGY OF RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Imparting the Law to Our Children- Deuteronomy 6

After giving the people of God the Ten Words¹ and the summary contained in The Great Commandment (Deuteronomy 6:6), God clearly tells how they are to be communicated and taught to upcoming generations. This passage is within the Great Peroration (Deuteronomy 4-11). Deuteronomy 5:1 opens the chapter containing the Decalogue, now Deuteronomy 6:4 *יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד* opens the next main section. It can be translated in numerous ways: “Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is One” or “Our God is Yahew Alone!” or (whole verse) “Obey, Israel, Yahweh. Yahew our God is Unique.”²

This treaty language of the ancient Near East emphasizes that God’s actions in the historical events that make up the exodus-conquest provide the motivation for a covenant

¹ Duane Christenson, *Word Biblical Commentary: Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 103.

² *Ibid.*, 142.

relationship between God and his people.³ It is important to remember that even the introduction of the law is framed with a relationship: a relationship of a covenant. The law was relational; it was covenantal.

The pairing of “heart” and “being” (soul-life, in verse 5) seems to suggest a distinction made between mental and emotional life. The love of God is to invade and embrace the conscious and unconscious part of humanity, in reality the complete mind. The “might” brings the love of God into the area of self-discipline.

The teachings of verse 6 are to be internalized first by the adult before shared with the children. They are to be inside the soul of the adult. Jeremiah wrote of the covenant, “I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). It is not taught outside the example shown by the parent or adult; the unity of the behavior and the teaching are inseparable.

Most biblical commentaries write numerous pages on the Ten Commandments and the Shema, and then seem to jump to the phylacteries⁴ and *mezuzot*. The injunctions of verses 8-9 may have led to practices, which caused people to lose sight of an internalized covenant in verses 5-7. God commands the Israelites how the commandments are to be transferred from one generation to the other. After internalizing the commands and living them out, parents are to communicate them to their children when they are sitting, walking, lying down or getting up from bed. In his commentary on Deuteronomy, Patrick Miller writes:

³ Christenson, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 143.

⁴ The phylacteries are two small black leather boxes made from the skin of kosher animals that are worn on the left arm and forehead of observant Jewish adult males. They contain verses from the Torah.

Deuteronomy is always aimed at the next generation. It takes the present (next) generation back to the past and brings the past afresh into the present. The children are now the ones before whom all choices are laid, and some day their children will be there and the divine instruction will confront them (e.g., 30:2) Can they learn afresh what it means to love the Lord wholeheartedly?⁵

The method of transference of the law and history of the people of God is to be done in the entirety of life, in close, intimate human relationships. The law and history of God is to be demonstrated, not just talked about. And if talked about, talked about in the normal pattern of the day not just a youth group meeting or Sunday school class. Adults are to internalize and embrace the law themselves, first and foremost. It is to be a part of their lives. It is to be so much a part of them that it overflows into their day-to-day relationships and out to the family. In his commentary on Deuteronomy, Duane Christensen writes:

The focus on teaching your children “these words” diligently within the context of the family—at all conceivable times and places—illustrates once again the pedagogical purpose of the book of DT. The context of this book was the primary curriculum in an ongoing program of religious education in ancient Israel. The use of phylacteries and mezuzoth were essentially pedagogical tools, designed to keep the great summary statements of the “Words of Yahweh central in the experience of each individual member of the covenant community.”⁶

Communication is to be done “as they go.” As they wake up in the morning and prepare for the day, they are to talk of the law and the faith. As they walk to the farm or job site, they are to talk of the struggles of obeying and following the law and the blessings of Yahweh. As they sit down and thank Yahweh for meals, they are to discuss the battles of Jericho and the faith of Joshua. As they sit in the home and plan the planting of crops and discuss the future of family, they are to bring into the conversation

⁵ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville: J. Knox Press, 1990), 107.

⁶ Christensen, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 145.

the Psalms and Proverbs of David and Solomon. As they retire for the night and think through the day they are to recount the blessings of God who freed them from the slavery of the Egyptians. This is to be done “as they go.” This assumes relationship with the person invested in. Of course, there could be poor relationship, like the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, but the desire is to have a relationship of care and love centered in a faith in God. The relational ministry found in Deuteronomy was one commitment for life. The commandments were the focus of constant communication inside and outside the home. They were to permeate every sphere of human life. Relationship is the method.

There has been criticism on “relational ministry” in the past few years. Root, in his book *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, attempted to evaluate youth work that claims to be relational, but has a third agenda or what he calls a “third thing.”⁷ This “third thing” seems to be an attempt to develop relationships with youth to bring them to a youth function, church or program. In his introduction, he criticizes a past youth ministry that had hired him to be a “bridge” to attempt to minister to some unchurched kids (skateboarders). He had been trained by Young Life to work with unchurched kids and now employed by a local, suburban church, he ran into some serious frustrations. The young people mocked and abused the youth leaders and continued in the midst of “the relational ministry” to sell drugs, curse, steal cash and vandalize the church building. The non-churched kids did not respond like church kids or good Young Life kids (who may have been church kids too). The youth leaders gave up and eventually the church gave up

⁷ Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 15.

on the vision of reaching this people group. In his experience, Root hit “rock bottom.”⁸

After the experience, and studying theology, particularly Bonhoeffer’s, he understood that relationship was not about an agenda. Root writes,

Ministry then is not about using relationships to get individuals to accept a “third thing,” whether that may be conservative politics, moral behaviors or even the gospel message. Rather ministry is about connection, one to another, about sharing in suffering and joy, about persons meeting persons with no pretense or secret motives. It is about shared life, confessing Christ not outside the relationship but within it. This, I learned, was living the gospel.⁹

After he learned this he went on to meet troubled kids in the school system. He carved out specific time to meet with youth who had serious issues with abuse, gangs, family problems and so forth. This one-on-one time may have been helpful, as these kids needed someone to care for them. Root is now serving as an assistant professor in Minnesota.

It is difficult reading books written about youth ministry by authors who are not running effective youth ministries. Passages like 1 Thessalonians 2 compel comments on such authors, “Time spent without sharing lives is only time spent.” Paul shared his life, not a one-year internship, or a few hours a week to be with the people of Thessalonica. He deeply cared for them over time and gave his life, not just a specific time. There is a failure of spending time with youth if the agenda is trying to get them to go to a program, or fulfilling needs to be a good youth pastor, or helping bring in other kids. Youth can smell that a mile away and resist it. Their “spidey sense” is on to that and they have built up guards to it from adults that use them.

⁸ Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Bonhoeffer is not often referred to as a youth ministry model, but he knew sacrifice and what it meant to give his life for a cause. Bonhoeffer gave his life to defeat one of the greatest evils in the twentieth century. In *Life Together*, he wrote of real Christian community, which is essential in youth ministry. Bonhoeffer articulates that the Church is a privilege, “So between the death of Christ and the Last Day is only by gracious anticipation of the last things that Christians are privileged to live in visible fellowship with other Christians.”¹⁰

Youth workers do not often describe the Church as a privilege, but can be heard complaining about church. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer writes, “Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting to-day for costly grace.”¹¹ This is a man who died trying to overthrow Hitler. He wrote, “When Christ calls a man He bids him come and die.”¹² Youth workers have a lot to answer for. Bonhoeffer understood Christian fellowship and sacrifice. Nothing close to Bonhoeffer is seen in the majority of youth work today. More of Bonhoeffer’s influence is needed in youth ministry.

Discipling People in Our Churches - 2 Timothy 2:1-2

It was Paul’s deep desire to provide new churches with qualified pastors and leaders, and his method was finding a few good people to personally develop to lead those churches. That is most likely one of the main purposes of the pastoral letters.¹³ He

¹⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 18.

¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 44.

¹² *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³ Armin W. Schuetze, *Peoples Bible Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing, 1891), 1.

probably wrote his first letter to Timothy and Titus from Macedonia, in the fall of 63 AD.¹⁴ Paul probably wrote 2 Timothy as a prisoner (“chained like a criminal” 2:9) from Rome.¹⁵ In between the two Timothy letters, Nero had increased persecution and blamed Christians for the burning of Rome in 64-65 AD. Paul most likely expected martyrdom (4:6) and it is believed he suffered execution in Rome either 67 or 68 AD, while 2 Timothy was written in 67 AD. This may be the last letter Paul wrote.

Correcting doctrinal error was the focus of 1 Timothy, while 2 Timothy was his last personal urgings to encourage and for him to be encouraged. He states in 1 Timothy 1:3, “As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer.” Paul’s personal needs were the context of 2 Timothy. He was lonely and felt deserted. Luke seems to be the only one with him. He desired Timothy to come quickly and bring his cloak and some scrolls and parchments. These were his final words to his “dear son” in the faith.

The transfer or handing over of the Gospel ministry is demonstrated clearly in the relationship of Paul and Timothy. Paul addresses Timothy as a spiritual father to a spiritual child, or son. He is expressing fatherly affection, similar to the expressions written in 1 Thessalonians. The second letter to Timothy is a very personal, relational letter from Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy (“beloved son,” 2 Timothy 1:1).

His encouragement to “fan into flame” (2 Timothy 1:6) and reminder to be of good courage (2 Timothy 1:7) are full of personal direction for a young man in ministry. Paul desired to pass the baton of leadership to this young man, and 2 Timothy is his

¹⁴ Schuetze, *Peoples Bible Commentary*, 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

advice and direction. He did not want this done in a weak state of mind and spirit.

Persecution was brutal and many refused the teachings of Paul, using sophisticated opposition.

To combat a possible weak disposition, Paul instructed Timothy to be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus (2:2). He was instructed to “kindle afresh” the gift and call he received from Christ. God had not given him a spirit of timidity, but of power, love and discipline. Timothy had a duty to perform and had to be instructed and reminded of what gifts and resources he had received in Christ.

Timothy is held in contrast to many who deserted Paul in Asia (2 Timothy 1:15). Paul expresses the discouragement of being abandoned.¹⁶ Timothy was not ashamed of Paul and continued to minister on his team. Timothy witnessed and experienced Paul’s life, his struggles and successes in ministry. Timothy stayed in the tough ministry when others deserted, fled and became so discouraged and distracted they dropped out of the work.

He was to be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus. “You therefore, my child, be continually strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” This is an imperative. He is not to find strength in his own self (1:6-9, 12-14). He is to work by the grace that comes from Christ. The Gnosticism and Stoicism of the day taught that strength and salvation came from within the person. The Gospel transferred by Paul expresses power received externally from Christ. It is interesting that in the teaching of Alcoholics Anonymous, the second of the twelve steps teaches that to overcome the weakness of an addiction to

¹⁶ William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 497.

alcohol the person must receive power from a deity outside himself. Paul instructs Timothy lead in ministry by his own power or strength. The power must come from God.

This passage gives tremendous insight into how Paul views ministry and how he hands the ministry over to Timothy. John Stott sums this up in excellent form: “Timothy had been called to responsible leadership in the church not only in spite of his natural diffidence but in the very area where the apostle’s authority was being repudiated. It is as if Paul says to him: “Never mind what other people may be thinking or saying or doing. Never mind how weak and shy you yourself may feel. As for you, Timothy be strong!”¹⁷

“You, therefore” is set in contrast to Phygelus and Hermogenes (1:15), as Timothy is to follow Paul’s example and not theirs. It is emphatic in meaning.¹⁸ This “you, therefore” brings back all the teachings in chapter one. Only through the empowering work of Christ he is therefore able to “fan the flame of his gift.” This gift and call was not accepted by Phygelus and Hermogenes, but was accepted by Onesiphorus (1:16-18).¹⁹ Timothy is to be “continually strengthened” expressing that God is the “agent of empowerment.”²⁰ Again, any work done in ministry, according to Paul’s teaching, is to be done by God’s power and grace, not by the power of humankind.

In verse 2 Paul writes, “And what you have heard from me through many witnesses, entrust these things to reliable (faithful) men, who will also be able to teach others.” As Paul is coming to the linear end of his ministry on Earth, expecting to die

¹⁷ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 2nd Timothy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984), 49.

¹⁸ Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 503.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

soon, he wants Timothy to pass on the body of information about the Gospel to people of good character, so they can pass it along. He wants this done relationally, personally.

Timothy is to identify these people and entrust the Gospel to them, to be sure it is communicated clearly. Paul requested that Timothy leave and come to Rome. This is to be done before he leaves. He is to entrust the Gospel to people who will teach it.

The methodology and body of information was demonstrated and communicated in the context of a relationship that was seen, felt and heard. It goes back to 1:13, which speaks of the “sound words” of the Gospel. This is the complete Gospel and not just a brief summary of it.²¹

The phrase “through many witnesses” has been a topic of controversy for Bible scholars throughout the years.²² Some have expressed it as a single event, maybe of his conversion or call,²³ some see it as the methods or modes of teaching, referring to different letters, preaching or examples in modeling.²⁴ Scholars seem most comfortable with the idea that Timothy received this teaching not in secret or from one person, but from a variety of believing Christians.²⁵ John Stott sees this as “public instruction whose

²¹ Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 506.

²² George T. Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 157.

²³ Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 505.

²⁴ Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 157.

²⁵ Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 220.

truth could be guaranteed by the many witnesses who had heard it and who could therefore check Timothy's teaching against the apostle's."²⁶

“Entrust” (*parathou*) is an imperative that expresses the real need to find faithful men. The idea expressed is of guarding the truth from opponents of the simple Gospel. It means, “The handing on should be done with the kind of care that such a precious treasure deserves.”²⁷ The “deposit” written of in 1 Timothy 1:13 and 14 is his by deposit, not his own invention.²⁸ Paul's “deposit” becomes Timothy's “deposit.” This deposit is of sound words, which Timothy heard from Paul. The Aorist tense suggests it is not referring to a single teaching or event but the whole of Paul's expressions and teachings over the time they were together.

It is not to find men to be put in institutional positions, but believing faithful men of character who are trustworthy to carry on the work already begun.²⁹ “Trustworthy men” (*anthropos*) generally notes no differentiation according to gender,³⁰ which refers to male specific.³¹ Montague writes, “It is not, however, the male gender-specific androis but the generic anthropois, which can apply to both men and women, as it probably does here, reflecting Paul's own formation of both men and women disciples.”³²

²⁶ Stott, *The Message of 2nd Timothy*, 50-51.

²⁷ Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 157.

²⁸ Stott, *The Message of 2nd Timothy*, 50.

²⁹ Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 506.

³⁰ Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 157.

³¹ Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eedmans, 1999), 619.

³² Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 157.

The word faithful used here has an emphasis on character and trustworthiness. They are to be accurate in teaching. The word is used in the phrase “the saying is trustworthy” (1 Timothy 1:12-17). It is in contrast to the men described in 2 Timothy 2:14. It can be a one-word description for the leadership of the church that is fully described in 1 Timothy 3. If anything can be seen from the relationship of Paul to Timothy, it was his personal discipleship.

PART THREE

STRATEGY

CHAPTER 6

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH FOR THE ADOLESCENT

You cannot give what you do not have. You cannot impart what you do not possess.

- Chuck Miller, *Discipleship Seminar Notebook*

Pay close attention to yourself.

- 1 Timothy 4:16

The Youth Worker's Role in Developing Healthy Ministry

In many local churches, the youth worker or youth pastor is delegated the responsibility to care for the young people in the church. The job description of the youth worker in a local church is usually one that expresses that the youth worker engage in running programs like Sunday school or youth group with retreats and events.¹ Running a program is part of the youth worker's mission, but only a small part.

The role of a youth worker in a healthy ministry that engages students in personal and spiritual growth in understanding who they are in Christ (identity), what group or fellowship they belong to (community) and how they can take responsibility for their own lives (autonomy), is much more than what is printed in a job description. Looking at

¹ Bob Taylor, *The Work of the Youth Minister* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1982), 109-110.

biblical models in the New Testament, there is an emphasis on character and relationships over any program responsibilities. This seems to be a stark difference between the all too present emphasis on program and effective, relational style.

To produce a healthy youth ministry there must be a model of a healthy youth pastor. He or she must exhibit a lifestyle of godly character, reflected in positive Christ-centered relationships. Kenda Dean and Ron Foster write on the difference between relational ministry and incarnational ministry in their book, *The God Bearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. After expressing that youth ministers are John the Baptists, who point youth to Christ they write:

And so, while there is only one incarnation, we cannot get around the fact that Christ expects each of us to “incarnate” his love relentlessly to the young. Most of us have someone in our lives who has incarnated Jesus, someone who has put flesh and bones on God’s love for us. Most of us can’t remember what we learned in Sunday school or youth group, but we have an indelible memory of people who taught us. Curriculum doesn’t teach; people do. Denying that we are the Christ (which all John the Baptists vigorously and rightly deny) does not change the fact that we are called to be *Christlike*, to bear that family resemblance that causes all who meet us to see God’s face in us and to know immediately to whom we belong. At the end of the day, it is still true that God chooses human beings over “ministries” as God’s preferred means of witness. The point of incarnational ministry is that the Person is the program.²

The youth worker has a role in abiding in Christ and bearing and expressing Christ-likeness. This character development cannot be overemphasized, as it seems to be the major role in which she or he must take in the life of young people. The youth worker must be a person of character that reflects Christ over and above any role of program director. The lifestyle of a youth worker is of paramount importance, reflecting Christ in time invested (or spent), all relationships (personal and professional), devotional life and

² Kenda Dean and Ron Foster, *The God Bearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2005), 29-31.

worship attendance and engagement. Most believers would say that this is an impossible task outside the power of the Holy Spirit.

While visiting church youth ministries in New York City, I came upon a church, whose pastor, Peter Scazzero had written a book titled *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. He gave me a copy enthusiastically, commenting on the need for youth pastors to be healthy and spiritually strong in order to pass Christ's love along to a younger generation. He writes, "The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership."³ Scazzero also writes of the sad life and ministry of Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision.⁴ Pierce may have set up the most influential missions organization in the world, but at an unreasonable cost to his family.⁵

In research for the book *Youth Ministry That Transforms*, the authors examined data from 2,131 youth workers. They write that the number one concern of youth workers is time conflict. This is particularly stated as "job demands verse personal needs."⁶ The authors found some youth workers expressed that job demands caused them to sacrifice their devotional life.⁷ Wesley Black, professor of Youth Education at Southwestern Theological Seminary writes of his serious issue of misguided priorities while running a demanding youth ministry, "During the busy activities of leading youth ministry, directing the youth choir, and filling in for the minister of music who had moved to

³ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵ Marilee Pierce Dunker, *Man of Vision Woman of Prayer* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1980).

⁶ Merton P. Strommen, Karen Jones and Dave Rahn, *Youth Ministry that Transforms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

another church, I forgot to attend to my own spiritual needs, I substituted planning youth Bible Studies sessions for my own personal bible reading.”⁸

Mark DeVries in his book *Sustainable Youth Ministry* writes, “We cannot build a healthy, sustainable youth ministry on the backs of those who are not healthy themselves.”⁹ DeVries writes that one of the main issues is that youth pastors have not developed a life outside of ministry:

When we have little or no life outside our ministries, we can easily develop unrealistic expectations, thinking that the church should “parent” us, provide us with a close circle of friends, offer worship and teaching stimulating enough that we always “get something out of it.” But when we have a life outside of work, we approach our imperfect institutions with a peace that can lead to long term change. When I begin to take myself and my situation too seriously, it helps to remember that, in the animal work, it’s the most intelligent creatures that play.¹⁰

The other major issue DeVries points out is investment of time in a healthy schedule. If the youth worker does not schedule her or his week, the youth worker will be pulled into automatic pursuit of his or her own compulsions. He writes if youth workers do not discipline themselves to a habit of a “rhythmic week,” they will burn out.¹¹ The rhythmic week consists of splitting each day into thirds (morning, afternoon, evening), and scheduling these blocks of time with work, a restorative Sabbath, personal time and flex time. The need for a Sabbath is a major concern of DeVries’ for youth workers, as he has witnessed many youth directors serving in demanding churches burn out.

⁸ Wesley Black, *An Introduction to Youth Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1998), 170.

⁹ Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn’t Last and What Your Church Can Do About It* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2008), 109.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

David Rahn, professor of Educational Ministries at Huntington College and Director of The Link Institute for Faithful and Effective Youth Ministry, notes a study that asked over two thousand youth pastors what their troubling concerns were. Some of the concerns: administration allows too little time to be with youth, lack of respect given at the job, lack of training in counseling limiting effectiveness, struggle to balance youth ministry and personal life and biggest obstacle to effective youth ministry is “myself.”¹² These concerns would not surprise anyone in youth work, as almost all youth workers have experienced these in one form or another. The real question is how to address them.

In 1990, Paul Borthwick wrote a book for youth workers titled, *Feeding Your Forgotten Soul: Spiritual Growth for Youth Workers*. After hitting a few of the major “hurdles” youth workers have to deal with in motivation, stagnation, sexual temptation and multiple expectations, he addresses some spiritual disciplines needed to care for the soul of the youth worker. Accountability, priorities and personal time alone with God seem to be the main disciplines he sees as needed. Of scripture reading he writes:

Here is a question almost guaranteed to induce awkwardness at a youth leaders gathering: what are you reading in the Bible lately? . . . a few have had fresh answers, but others seem to be digging way back in time to respond . . . we would all respond to a student who asked, “How can I grow in my relationship with God?” by encouraging him or her to read the Bible.¹³

It would be amiss to ignore the statement that the role of youth worker is to be close to God. Youth workers who attempt to reach youth and help them grow in Christ must make it a priority to grow in Christ. The disciplines of consistent scripture reading, an active worship life and strong accountability of age appropriate peers has helped many

¹² Strommen, Jones and Rahn, *Youth Ministry that Transforms*, 36.

¹³ Paul Borthwick, *Feeding Your Forgotten Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Vondervan, 1990), 85.

youth worker stay on the right path. The disciplines youth workers teach to youth are to be demonstrated in the lifestyle of the youth worker, or the position is one of hypocrisy.

The modeling example of the youth pastor in discipling a few to reach the whole group is also a clear role of the youth pastor. He or she must set an example to the rest of the adult leaders that healthy relationships, based on the grace and love of Jesus Christ, are the goal, not designated a special, elite group. As he or she chooses a few to relate to personally, it's important that the youth director not choose the more attractive kids in the desire to grow their youth work, but prayerfully ask the Lord Jesus who he or she is to be led to. If the youth director chooses the worldly attractive youth to give what could be considered special attention, he or she is hurting the youth group by putting on them a worldly value on discipleship. This modeling is important for the other youth leaders.

In his examination of the preaching of Martin Luther, Fred Meuser quotes Luther as proclaiming from the pulpit, "When the preacher speaks, God speaks!"¹⁴ If that is the case, then the Sunday school teacher and youth group leader who is addressing the issues of the day to youth must be informed of God's Word. The role of the youth worker in the life of youth should be to proclaim Scripture and speak for God. Luther's words are strong, but can be profound for today's youth worker.

The youth worker must exhibit a role that connects the adolescent to Christ and His Church as well as developing and demonstrating godly character in a lifestyle that reflects Christ. "The pastoral theologian must interpret culture as well as scripture," writes Dean Borgman in his practical theology for youth ministry titled *When Kumbaya*

¹⁴ Fred W. Meuser, *Luther the Preacher* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1983), 11.

is Not Enough.¹⁵ The youth worker must be an “agent” for youth in the church, helping congregations connect to adolescents with understanding and care. The act of being an agent or the act of agency is a technical term that expresses representation for the good of the one served. A real estate agent pledges agency to the client, speaking for them with their best interest in mind. Webster’s 3rd *New International Dictionary* defines agent as “one who acts for or in place of another by authority from him as a representative.”¹⁶ The youth pastor in the life of a healthy ministry acts on behalf of the youth, representing them to the rest of the congregation, building a bridge to the intergenerational church.

As an agent desiring positive growth for youth in his or her care, the youth worker’s role would be in working to dismantle the one-eared Mickey Mouse program and thought process in the local church.¹⁷ The one-eared Mickey Mouse is a model of ministry that created an environment for the church (or many times the youth group) to isolate teenagers into a community outside the rest of the church. Youth (one ear) were almost entirely separated from adults (the head). Youth met in the youth room listening to talks, while the rest of the church met in the sanctuary listening to sermons. The youth gathered on Sunday nights, while the rest of the church gathered Sunday mornings.

The youth worker must work hard to resist this model from occurring in the church. Dean calls on youth workers to be about “ousting the One-Eared Mickey Mouse”

¹⁵ Dean Borgman, *When Kumbayao is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 49.

¹⁶ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, “agent.”

¹⁷ Stuart Cummings-Bond, “The One-Eared Mickey Mouse,” *Youthworker* 6 (Fall 1989): 76.

model of youth ministry.¹⁸ She claims this model has been a part of the problem with the large exodus of young people from the Church, stating that the youth group is notoriously unreliable for fostering ongoing faith.¹⁹ She claims that when

Youth graduated from the “youth group” — the only form of ministry many young people had ever experienced — they effectively graduated from church as well. Those who returned to church as adults often found worship an alien experience, a distant second to the warmth and intimacy they remembered from the youth ministry of their teen years.²⁰

Dean goes on to say this vanishing of youth from mainline churches has resulted in difficulty keeping youth in church at all. Surprisingly, in the Presbyterian church of the mid-1990s, many youth that attend and finish confirmation classes tend to see the service of confirmation not as a rite of passage, but a graduation out of church.²¹

The youth worker must aggressively take the role to reverse this unbiblical and destructive model of the one-eared Mickey Mouse. There is no place in scripture that separates the young people from the rest of the church. Paul states that the different parts of the body are important for mutual growth: “If the foot should say, ‘because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body (1 Cor 12:15).” The youth group is part of the body, and the model of the one-eared Mickey Mouse is contrary to the teaching of Paul. The congregation needs youth and youth workers would be wise to accept that youth need the congregation. DeVires writes that the problem is best understood in a word he has made up, *horizontalization*:

¹⁸ Dean and Foster, *The God Bearing Life*, 31-32.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Richard R. Osmer, *Confirmation: Presbyterian Practices in Ecumenical Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996), 4.

Horizontalization is the practice of isolating youth into structures that (often unintentionally) limit their interactions in the church to those most like them. Tough *horizontalized* youth ministries may spend millions on facilities and technologies, those investments, in many contexts, only exacerbate the fundamental problem — generational isolation of youth.²²

He suggests the alternative: “verticality” or “together” ministry. Jeff Baxter, writes in his book on intergenerational ministry, *Together: Adults and Teenagers Transforming The Church*, about the statistics that indicate the Church is not attracting or keeping youth once they arrive:

I am convinced that one of the primary problems is the way churches segregate our youth . . . It’s not unlike what happens at many family gatherings . . . at mealtime, the children would eat in one room (usually at a card table with folding chairs), while the adults gathered in the dining room . . . There is nothing wrong with this kind of separation from time to time, but our churches have been doing it every week for decades. Hour after hour, teenagers barely see, talk to or interact with adults in the church.²³

One way to reverse this trend is to allow God to work in His way and be secure in callings. Discussing family ministry can be threatening to the traditional youth worker. DeVries book *Family-Based Youth Ministry* begins with chapter one: “Something’s Wrong: The Crisis in Traditional Youth Ministry,” a serious critique of youth work.²⁴ Steve Thomas in his book, *Your Church Can Be Family Friendly: How You Can Launch a Successful Family Ministry in Your Congregation*, writes of the process of determining the vision of their ministry, “Through the course of our discussions, it became clearer and clearer to us that building a ministry that targeted the needs of parents would result in a

²² DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry*, 9.

²³ Jeff Baxter, *Together: Adults and Teenagers Transforming the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 150-151.

²⁴ Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 21-35.

positive impact on the entire family. In fact, we wondered if this kind of ministry might eventually replace Youth Ministry altogether.”²⁵

This talk can be concerning to those who know the significance of good youth work and the average youth worker would begin to get defensive. Youth workers must question if it is their role to keep their head and not react when it seems like a person in leadership is expressing the need to replace the youth work with an untried and untested program. It is the role of the youth worker to be secure in who he or she is and not allow their identity to be tied up in a program. This is much easier said than done.

Chap Clark and Pamela Erwin write a chapter to address these specifics in the book *New Directions for Youth Ministry*. They begin by pointing out eight areas youth ministries and youth ministers can hinder relationship with teenagers and the family while attempting to build up the program. The eight areas are not considering family times when scheduling youth events, assuming the role of parents, making parents look bad, not keeping parents informed, not encouraging or offering support for families, undermining parents’ judgment or authority, not including families in youth events and failing to connect teenagers with the extended church family.²⁶

Clark and Erwin point out three basic qualities of connecting families to youth work (strengthening families, connecting youth to the extended church and helping the Church function as a community of believers), and write ten specific suggestions that can

²⁵ Steve Thomas, *Your Church Can be Family Friendly: How You Can Launch a Successful Family Ministry in Your Congregation* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 72.

²⁶ Chap Clark and Pamela Erwin, “Reconstructing Family Life,” in *New Directions for Youth Ministry*, ed. Cathi Basler (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1998), 49-52.

be implemented to reverse segregation. Simple as they may be, overlooking them could be costly to a youth worker in achieving the goal of spiritual growth of their teenagers.

First, they suggest developing strong relationships with a few parents of youth. Starting with a few is not too overwhelming and usually grows and strengthens a ministry. This involves listening to parents (a strange concept for most in ministry, especially youth workers). Phone calls, lunch or breakfast meetings, asking for feedback and hosting a prayer time for parents are specific ways to encourage this relationship.

Second, excellent, clear and repetitive communication with parents is suggested. This not only helps with information, but, prevents misunderstandings and conflicts that are present in youth ministries. Newsletters, excellent fliers, updated and easily accessed web pages and monthly and year-long calendars are good means for this to occur. Multiple streams of accurate communication with parents seem necessary. As a way to love parents, they suggest, “The further ahead you can plan, the better for parents.”²⁷

Third, the youth worker must be sensitive to family time and family commitments in contact work and program planning. She or he must prioritize the family over program or youth ministry relationships. A father investing time with a teenage daughter for a Saturday lunch is more valuable in the development of the adolescent than going to laser tag with a summer intern. Laser tag can happen another Saturday, but lunch with dad is important in the life of a teenager. The authors suggest doubling up meetings to reduce the amount of hours of program.²⁸

²⁷ Clark and Erwin, “Reconstructing Family Life,” 59.

²⁸ Ibid., 60.

The next two suggestions are being a resource for parents in providing parent workshops and giving affirmation to parents when the youth worker catches them doing something right. These suggestions can be invaluable in building relationships and trust as a youth ministry attempts to minister to the whole family. As in youth work, it would be wise not to let a weak response hinder these suggestions, as a few showing up may be significant, and people don't always know how to respond to affirmation.

The sixth suggestion of Clark and Erwin is to include parents in youth events. They suggest family camping trips or mission trips, parent-teenager rafting trips and service projects. The suggestion of father/son or father/daughter as well as mother/son and mother/daughter rite of passage events is an area that would not take too much work to include in a yearly schedule. The youth worker would usually find strong support for events like these, as well as some parents help running them. The suggestion of mission trips with parents, addresses a great deal of issues especially with overseas trips. These programs would not be hard to introduce and not too difficult to manage with a variety of parents to help drive and take care of some discipline issues.

The seventh suggestion is to plan a few intergenerational events for the whole church. Youth would not only volunteer to serve, but put the event on. They suggest a picnic, luncheon or breakfast in partnership with senior members of the church. Cross-generational development of relationships helps cement and build positive relationships with the extended church. Relationship with seniors in the church would be welcomed by all, as some more mature individuals would naturally share with youth, and most youth would enjoy interaction with these more mature church members.

The seventh suggestion could lead to the eighth, which is expanding vision to the wider church of recruiting volunteers to serve in the youth work. Younger adolescents seem to connect to the grandparent type.²⁹ It is important to have a diversity of ages and styles in the leadership of youth work. Quiet youth are drawn to different ages groups as mentors; it is important that we do not keep them from that. It would be helpful for many youth who have come from single parent homes to experience relationships outside the norm of the mid-twenty youth intern.

The last suggestion of Clark and Erwin is probably the most difficult for the youth worker. They state, “Work with the extended church community to include teenagers.”³⁰ The suggestion that youth be included in areas that traditionally have been held by adults is not easy to implement for youth workers. He or she can encourage youth to participate in worship by reading Scripture, helping with worship music, ushering and other areas, but sometimes the youth director does not have the authority to make that occur. That is where the senior pastor or clergy can express that need and communicate that vision.

In summary, the youth pastor needs to be healthy (emotionally, relationally and spiritually) to run a healthy ministry. This is reflected in his or her call, vision and priorities. The personal health of the youth worker needs to be addressed so that the large burden carried by the local youth worker is recognized by church leadership and the leadership wise enough to encourage him or her to time for personal away time. Counseling should be encouraged, without the youth worker being fearful of being labeled, any embarrassment or judgment, if emotional issues of family history, stress or

²⁹ Clark and Erwin, “Reconstructing Family Life,” 62.

³⁰ Ibid.

the burden of work with needy teenagers,. Personal devotions should be encouraged with no hint of the legalism of guilt.

The Clergy's Role in Developing Healthy Ministry

In brainstorming gatherings, goal setting committees or planning meetings when a new wonderful idea gets verbalized, the bottom line as to whether the ministry, direction or program is set to happen, hinges on the answer to the question: “What does the Pastor say about this?” The senior pastor carries the authority and responsibility for most of the vision and direction of the church. In the Presbyterian Church, it is said the elder board is responsible for direction and vision, but in my experience in four different Presbyterian churches, the elder boards were the ones saying, “What does the pastor say about this?” The pastor may not control all programs and ministries in church, but he or she has as much or more say than anyone else in regards to a direction change or success or failure of any ministry. For the most part I have experienced encouragement to integrate youth into the congregation; the issue has not been with the senior pastor, but the youth pastor.

In a word, the role of clergy in reversing the problem of segregating youth would be seem to be support. In his book, DeVries writes, “When I talk about implementing a family-based youth ministry, it’s important to understand that I am talking less about establishing specific programs and more about creating an ongoing ethos (what might be called a ‘new normal’) in ministry.”³¹ DeVries discovered that moving too fast can end a movement before it gets started. That’s the role of the clergy — to help the youth pastor and leaders make it happen with the right timing.

³¹ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 176.

The pastor can support this idea by personally reaching out to youth, not only in sermons, but visiting youth programs, talking to youth in the hallway and mentioning the youth publicly. The ears of all generations perk up on Sunday morning when a preacher says something like, “this especially applies to the young people here, as they seem to be exposed to this more than the adults.”

My present pastor is open to help clergy connect to the new influx of youth that attend our church. He asked me to present a brief report to the clergy on how they can “do better” in connecting with the youth. Of the ten clergy there, half listened and engaged. I was surprised the younger clergy looked at their watches and seemed to express they already knew how to connect. It is not surprising youth tell me they like the older preachers better than the younger ones.

Chris Foslbee of Sonlife Ministries encourages pastors to “not try to be cool, but be yourselves.”³² He says the role of clergy in the lives of young people is to be somewhat transparent and vulnerable and confidently speak into the spiritual lives of young people without coming across in a patronizing form.³³

The role of clergy cannot be overemphasized. In politics, the term “Bully Pulpit” describes the platform the President has in pushing through his agenda. This term shows just how powerful the person in the pulpit really is; he or she can use the position (or the pulpit), to communicate the need to embrace youth in the congregation. Words of the pastor on Sunday morning can set the vision, mood and culture of a church.

³² Chris Folmsbee, “Involving Youth in Worship,” *Rev Magazine* (March/April 2005), <http://www.anewkindofyouthministry.com/articles/involving-youth-in-worship/> (accessed December 1, 2011).

³³ *Ibid.*

Dennis Guernsey writes there is a new role for local church pastors that desire to minister to families.³⁴ He writes of the healthy family system and how it connects to the family system of the local church. The pastor must promote family integration, by bringing the parts together. It involves allowing others to be caregivers.³⁵ He also writes the pastor can encourage family adaptability and adjustment, with strong flexibility of the needs of the families in the church. The most important role of the pastor is to develop a “sense of community,” to create belonging.³⁶

In summary, the pastor has a unique role in bringing health to a church. If clergy model healthy relationships, it will be seen and exhibited in the lives of youth. If the church is seen as family, then youth are seen as the teenagers or adolescents of that family. They have specific needs that scream for attention. If the “parent” (clergy) of that family ignores the needs of adolescents there will be a cost. But, if the “parent” (clergy) embraces youth and sees them as part of the family or community with real needs and feelings, expressed in healthy ways, then community and youth will flourish in the church. A church may also see growth, with parents following youth to the local church.

The Family Role in Developing Healthy Ministry

It is pretty clear from Scripture, family is the model for the Church, ministry and even understanding the Fatherhood of God. Israel was referred to as a household of God (Amos 5:25). When Jesus was told that his mother and brothers were there to see him, he

³⁴ Dennis B. Guernsey, *New Design for Family Ministry* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries International, 1982), 106.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 109.

responded, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s Word and put it into practice (Luke 8:19-21).” He referred to God as Abba, Father (Mark 14:36).

Guernsey writes that the local church is a family of families:

If what we know about health in family systems is true, then I am suggesting that the same holds true if the church envisions itself as a Family of Families. The members will feel as sense of belonging while at the same time experiencing a sense of freedom. Healthy families foster a sense of autonomy while at the same time fostering a sense of responsibility for one another. The whole is deemed necessary and important but never to the exclusion of the parts. In turn, the parts exhibit a sense of loyalty to the whole while becoming all that they can be. In an ideal sense the church is a place where the person, his or her family, and the church as a Family of Families prosper.³⁷

The concept here is biblical, noting 1 Corinthians 12. All of the parts work together, but do not become the same part. The words Guernsey uses are just what adolescents need: belonging, autonomy, freedom, necessary, important, loyalty. There is also a strong sense of community communicated here that is affirmed by other healthy families in a local church. This concept of the local church being a family of families can fill the needs of young people with the loss of the extended family.³⁸

Guernsey says the role of family is to help with the task of socialization. Socialization is defined as “the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society.”³⁹ The family can accomplish this task and also communicate the role expectation and status that are needed in a culture. If this idea of family of families were to be embraced throughout the church, there may be a stronger communication and integration of the faith.

³⁷ Guernsey, *New Design for Family Ministry*, 105.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

The role of family in developing a healthy ministry is to be the main agent of socialization into the faith, with freedom and grace, and interface with other families to help with the healthy development of young people. Families could gather together for communities and support with adults, grandparents, children and youth of all ages to develop healthy intergenerational relationships. Outside the Gospel itself, this may meet the greatest need.

The Church Community Role in Developing Healthy Ministry

“What do we, like our church, believe about abortion?” was the question, which came out of left field from the seventh grade girl who looked like she didn’t even know what abortion was. She wanted to know what her faith community believed. She was a part of the community and wanted to know what “we believe.” Not all people, or teenagers embrace all the teaching of a church, but this is an example of a middle school student so connected to church fellowship that she equated her beliefs with the beliefs of the community. I wonder how she will feel in five or ten years. I hope the community continues and she helps form it.

Malan Nel of Petoria and Vista University in South Africa states, “Youth ministry is not about finding an extra place for yet another ministry, but about finding a place for youths in every ministry.”⁴⁰ He goes on to write of his inclusive congregational approach, which finds a place for youth among the people and the ministries of the church. He says, “Every ministry in the church is relevant to youths. Every ministry contains rich potential

⁴⁰ Malan Nel, “The Inclusive Congregational Approach to Youth Ministry,” in *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church* by Mark H. Senter, III, Wesley Black, Chap Clark, Malan Nel and Mark Senter (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 7.

for youth ministry.”⁴¹ “The task is twofold- to sensitize every discipline of ministry for its relevancy to the youths (as part of the whole) and to rediscover and define the place of the youths as part of the congregation.”⁴² He also writes that when youth have no reason to value their congregations, they often meet their spiritual needs in the para-church.

Others disagree that youth can be integrated into all areas of the Church. In his response to Nel’s inclusive congregational approach to youth ministry, Clark notes it is not possible for them to connect with all areas of ministry and that adolescence is a transitional phase that needs specific attention. He does not believe a healthy youth ministry will occur just by putting youth into all the different ministries of the church, because their needs are much more specific.⁴³ One thing most would agree on is that youth need to be embraced into community, and the burden falls mostly on the mature.

In summary, for the local church community to embrace young people, there must be an openness to allow them to integrate and when the possibility arrives, not repel them. If young people are participating in worship, helping in service, sharing from their mission trips and attending church events that are not put on by the youth department, this will occur more naturally. The concept of Guernsey’s family of families, if communicated well from the pulpit would be a wonderful start.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Nel, “The Inclusive Congregational Approach to Youth Ministry,” 6.

⁴² Ibid., 7.

⁴³ Chap Clark, “Response from a Missional Perspective,” in *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church* by Mark H. Senter, III, Wesley Black, Chap Clark, Malan Nel and Mark Senter (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 27-28.

⁴⁴ Guernsey, *New Design for Family Ministry*, 97.

CHAPTER 7

HEALTHY PROGRAM OF MINISTRY THAT REVERSES THE ABANDONMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

A Program of Worship that Directs Youth to See Their Identity in God

Kara Powell of The Fuller Youth Institute shared a story from the platform of the Youth Specialties Convention in October 2010. She told of a youth service in a local church that began the service the normal way it had each Sunday morning, and then young people came up and replaced the worship leaders – one-by-one. It started with the greeter, the music leadership, the adults praying and even the sermon was intentionally interrupted as a young person got up and finished it. The idea of youth taking over was not just talked about but became a reality in the minds and hearts of that congregation.¹

Folmsbee writes to see youth in the pews of a church, get them on the platform. “Students love to see their peers participating in significant roles in the church.”² He lists many ways young people can be embraced and connected in the worship service: play an instrument or sing in worship, greet worshipers or serve as an usher in worship services, allow a young person to share announcements or give a testimony, encourage young

¹ Kara Powell, Notes from “Youth Specialties Convention,” Nashville, October 2010.

² Folmsbee, “Involving Youth in Worship.”

people to lead prayers or read Scripture in the congregation worship service and let them serve on the technical crew in the sound booth. One area of the service to connect young people to is the sermon. Nel writes, “The youths must be considered in the preaching ministry of the church—they must figure into the preacher’s agenda or text.”³

One of the most significant areas for young people to connect is with worship music. Luther believed music was the second most powerful form of communication besides preaching of the Word.⁴ Songs youth are familiar with from retreats and camps can be a bridge to the worship service. If some of the songs lead on Sunday night in the youth group time of worship could be used the next week with the intergenerational church, it could help make a positive connection and make young people feel more at home. If older hymns are sung, a brief explanation of the song’s theology or history can make a connection to young people as to why the congregation sings it. Alvin Reid in his book, *Raising the Bar: Ministry in the New Millennium*, writes of teaching about worship to the youth:

Be a blessing more than being blessed. Many think the purpose of coming to a worship service is to be blessed, and music can, indeed offer a blessing. But the primary meaning of worship is to ascribe value or worship or worth, to another. So worship should focus more on being a blessing to God than on receiving blessings from Him. Enough narcissism in the church now. Teach youth to offer themselves to God as living sacrifices.⁵

In summary, youth are part of the congregation and segregation of young people from the worship service will disconnect them. In his Church Growth seminar at Fuller

³ Nel, “The Inclusive Congregational Approach to Youth Ministry,” 9.

⁴ Borgman, *When Kumbaya is Not Enough*, 176.

⁵ Alvin Reid, *Raising the Bar: Ministry in the New Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional), 143.

Seminary, Peter Wagner taught three things determine the age of a congregation: age of the people on the platform, content of the sermon and style of music. If young people are freed to worship with these three areas in mind, they will connect in worship.

Therefore, in programs churches must promote and announce intergenerational worship service enthusiastically, bringing young people to it consistently; involve young people to not only sit in pews at the worship service, but serve as acolytes, Scripture readers, ushers, testimony sharers and music leaders; teach young people about the heart of worship; and bring clergy into the lives of young people, by inviting them to youth events and lifting them in Word and prayer at youth group settings. This list is definably not an end all to integrating youth into worship, but it is surely a start.

A Program of Instruction that Teaches Youth Who They Are in Christ

To reverse systemic abandonment of our youth they must be seen as individuals.

Clark writes in his book *Hurt 2.0*:

One of the hallmarks of abandonment is the cultural shift from a nurturing focus on individuals to a focus on the group, the crowd, the statistics, the record, the program, the institution. Granted, addressing the conclusion that the most significant help we can offer our young is to address their needs from the bottom up, at the point of the individual adolescent. Adults must care for and reach the individuals who have suffered from abandonment throughout their lives.⁶

This is not just a concept from the leading experts today, but clearly found in Scripture. As discussed earlier, Paul and his team minister, “Like a mother caring for her little children (1 Thessalonians 2:7) . . . As a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom

⁶ Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 191.

and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:11 ,12).” This requires enough “disciplers” to disciple the whole youth group, not just part. Teaching may be from the teacher in an upfront setting in a larger group, but it is wise to follow it up individually and personally reinforce the content with smaller groups of focus. This helps communicate the content and keep the attention of the individual. It helps student in processing, absorbing and integrating the content of teaching in a more personal way. If Paul’s method of personally connecting with each student was embraced, attachment to fellowship and content will be absorbed more effectively. If seemed to be effective in the early church of the Thessalonians.

Any teaching today to adolescents must be relational and built on a foundation of trust between the teacher and the young person. As young people need time to trust adults, the effective biblical teacher will invest time with young people to gain trust capital. Clark continues:

If adults are willing to wade through this lack of trust, and if they honestly desire to come alongside and nurture adolescents as they make their way into the community of adults, it will not take long for adolescents to recognize the sincerity and allow these adults into their lives. The only qualification an adult needs is willingness and fortitude to authentically care.⁷

The investment of time in the lives of the ones being taught is essential to effective teaching of adolescents today.

Overlooking older members of the congregation for teaching young people is one act of poor stewardship in youth work. Most youth workers immediately pursue younger adults to lead and teach the youth. Dan Lambert, professor at John Brown University, writes in his book on holistic teaching, *Teaching that Makes a Difference*:

⁷ Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 191.

Unfortunately, too many wise and experienced teachers hit retirement age and retire from church teaching as well. Our youth are losing a wealth of experience and knowledge by never sitting at the feet of godly men and women who have been through life's skirmishes. Even a battalion of energetic 23-year-olds can't match the impact of that one 70-year-old can have in the life of teens.⁸

I have had personal experience with a leader of youth who is now in his eighties. He began to minister to me when I was a teenager in the 1960s, and later, when I became youth minister, he continued to teach Sunday school, cook breakfast for the youth, open his home for parties and even coach a basketball team in the county league. When I first arrived in the youth group as a new convert of one week, he welcomed me in fellowship, even though my friends and I had broken his front window in a fistfight. His influence on hundreds of youth cannot be calculated, except by the economy of God. Age was an asset in his case and scripture would lean in this direction (Deuteronomy 4:9; Titus 2:1-6).

Clark makes the point that to "challenge" youth is a form of abandonment.⁹ He says it is like pounding a finger into their chest, but more than that, a "challenge" is an attempt to get them to do something that may be for the benefit of the teacher. An example of this would be a youth worker "challenging" youth to bring friends to group, or challenging them to fulfill a requirement of a consistent, daily quiet time. Both of these can be good positive actions of a disciple, but it is possible if we "challenge" youth to do this, it can be a form of manipulation to affect a cause that can lose purpose. The youth worker's motives may be at play here, attempting to grow his or her group, or to be able to publicly state that "Our youth have quiet times every day."

⁸ Dan Lambert, *Teaching that Makes a Difference: How to Teach for Holistic Impact* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2004), 23.

⁹ Chap Clark, Notes from "Fun in the Son," South Padre Island, Texas, July 1994.

The New Testament uses the words encouragement and urging (1 Thessalonians 2: 11,12). Teaching youth to perform for the teacher may be short-sighted in the life of the young person, and may result in pushback later. I remember a parents meeting years ago, when a parent expressed thanks for motivating her son to take the garbage out, only to add they wished he would do it because the parent had asked, not just because the youth pastor told him. At the time I felt I could not win, but years later with two sons of my own, I now understand the feelings expressed. Sometimes behavior modification is taught rather than adherence to loving and obeying parents.

Dan Lambert writes, “To teach holistically is to touch every part of who the student is. This includes the physical, mental, social, and spiritual realms. The idea is to teach individuals in the way God has created us, as whole beings made in his image, rather than fragmented parts.”¹⁰ He goes on to say that in the past few decades there has been a tendency for “ill-educated lay people to facilitate discussions for groups of other lay people—which too often amount to the blind leading the blind.”¹¹

In the limited time to teach young people today, it is important to not waste time with the packaging or window dressing, but emphasize the message of the life-changing Gospel. Teaching must be centered in Jesus Christ. Young people today need to hear the Gospel. Young people need to hear and see the disciplines demonstrated by adults who struggle to live them out in this complicated world. Young people need answers to the questions they face in regards to faith, without being brushed aside with comments like, “We are following a planned curriculum right now, we’re not talking about _____.”

¹⁰ Lambert, *Teaching that Makes a Difference*, 15.

¹¹ Ibid.

DeVries suggests making a priority in teaching parents and teenagers together in courses like discipleship, sexuality, decision-making, communication, community building and other question and answer topics with the right teachers.¹² DeVries created a curriculum that deals directly with integrating adolescents and adults titled “Bridges,” that is adaptable for Sunday school, youth groups or stand-alone events.¹³

To reverse systemic abandonment, young people need to be taught how to live their lives in Christ: who they are in Christ (identity) and what the spiritual benefits and blessings of being a Child in the Kingdom of God are. They need to receive individual instruction partnered with community interaction of the blessing of being in a Christ-centered, local church (community, fellowship) that will uphold them and support them through the journey of adolescence. They need gentle urging within teaching content to encourage them to grasp the disciplines without performance criteria. They need loving teaching that concerns their upbringing, without hidden agendas of adults. This can be shown in the lives and word of adults who invest time into caring and teaching.

A Program of Fellowship that Embraces Youth into an Intergenerational Church

Young people need to belong to a group of peers. They desperately need a group their own age they trust and relate to. They would invent a youth group, if it were not facilitated for them. Each young person needs a small group that functions as a reference or discipleship group that addresses their personal concerns and serve a sounding board for the many feelings they have bursting out of their adolescent minds and hearts.

¹² DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 204.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 212.

Hebrews 10:24-25, tells the church not to get in the habit of missing gatherings, as some are drawn to isolation in this age of adolescence. They need each other.

Another passage helpful in work with adolescents is 1 Corinthians 12. Paul's true desire is for young people to understand and embrace others in their peer group and community in the local church. When teenagers share from this passage in a group setting, they express the desired outcome of welcoming and appreciating different groups and their significance in a local youth group. This passage, if applied well in a youth group setting can produce very positive fellowship. It may be important to fold them into a local youth group and then bridge the gap to different generations.

As a result of a group sharing this passage, young people have embraced teenagers with special needs without any fanfare and brought them into fellowship. It brought leaders to tears to see a local high school basketball star pray out loud for the near fatal surgery of one physically challenged girl who is restricted to a wheelchair for life, and to see a group of twenty-five eleventh grade girls drive forty-five minutes one way to support a mentally challenged girl in her basketball game. This is a desired outcome that comes from patiently urging and encouraging young people to embrace those who are slightly different. Other generations need to experience and see that too.

They need other generations as well. DeVries writes:

For too many years, the attention of those of us in youth ministry has been focused, quite appropriately, on students and their needs. But when our perspective of a problem is limited to what happens within a specific group alone, we tend, of necessity to ignore the powerful changes created by interactions between groups. As long as we attempt to "solve" the crisis in youth ministry with a myopic focus on adolescents and their problems, treat them as if their lives

happen in isolation from the powerful forces of family and culture, the solutions we develop will always be too small.¹⁴

Although DeVries feels that focus has been too much on the needs of young people, it is clear they need adult interaction in church fellowship. They need community with both their peers and with other generations.

Youth may build their own peer group, but will not gravitate toward community with other age groups. Some teenagers may help with children for the purpose of missing Sunday school or because they like children, but most have to be helped by outside forces in integration between youth and adults. Like other spiritual disciplines, respected youth leaders, other significant adults and parents help the process with strong encouragement. Expecting a little pushback and passive aggressive resistance is a good idea. Nonetheless, a focused effort needs to be made, or it will be too convenient to just drop the goal of integration and carry on with the traditional youth programming already applied, tested and true. It should be noted that Marv Penner's *Youth Worker's Guide to Parent Ministry* lists a nine-step process, the first four just changing the hearts and minds as well as laying a foundation, before any program is developed.¹⁵

Each young person needs a small, designated group of six-to-fifteen participants, with each individual being a significant member. Two adult mentors, active members of the congregation, who love Christ and are willing to invest time and energy into lives consistently are needed for each group. It is better these mentors commit to three years of investment so they can speak into the lives of the young people with wisdom, but that is

¹⁴ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 173.

¹⁵ Marv Penner, *Youth Worker's Guide to Parent Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

difficult to require. The hope is that with two mentors per group, one can carry on when the other has to move on. Two are better than one, so when one falls, the other can pick him or her up. When two or three are gathered together, Jesus is in their midst, as promised in Matthew 18. Jesus sent the seventy out in pairs, assumedly for support and encouragement, as well as keeping each other on the right path and vision.

This modeling of community by adult leaders is essential for adolescents' growth. It is one thing to tell young people to get close and have community, but it is quite another to show them. Youth leaders need to develop their own community and uplifting relationships for support. Jesus said, "This is how men will know that you are my disciples, by the love you have for each other (John 13:33-34)." Maybe the most important gathering of youth ministry is the fellowship and community of adult leaders.

The concept of the Youth Family is the "program." The plan is to help adults in the church discover ministry with youth by encouraging them to be a part of a team. That team agrees to commit ten-to-fifteen hours a week to minister to youth. The commitment breaks down to Sunday night being at youth group which concludes with small groups they lead, one major activity a month, a couple hours of contact time including phoning and connecting to all their focus youth, and the Tuesday night Youth Family Fellowship.

The Youth Family is not just a meeting, but a community that together ministers to young people in the Falls Church congregation and neighborhood. Because of the busy schedule of Washington, DC workers, it is recognized that to give that many hours to serve in a ministry means they are probably unable to participate in another fellowship, so the hope is that Tuesday night gathering will meet that need. With the motto: "We must be the people of God, before we do the work of God," the Youth Family gathers

two-to-three times a month for a parent-cooked dinner, worship, Bible study, biblical teaching and instruction on how to help their ministry grow. The last twenty-to-thirty minutes of the gathering are program planning or administrative details, which usually split in departments of Middle School, High School and College. Each Youth Family member reports monthly to their leader any information or needed help.

This community models for youth a picture of relational community and fellowship. The paired up team often becomes close, grabbing lunch together and participating in other social activities. There have been a few weddings involving Youth Family members that served together or had their co-leaders in their weddings as groomsmen and bridesmaids. The closeness of the Youth Family becomes evident to the youth and is a desired relationship that young people look up to. As these adults model strong community to young people, they bridge them to other generations of the church.

Another program that may be effective is the college-aged Summer Staff. To have a handful of college-age Christ-centered people who “give their summer to God,” can be a bridge for adolescents to see community in action. For a reasonably-small budget, college-aged disciples come on the scene and show young people love within the team concept. This “program” has produced numerous comments by young people expressing their desire to “be on summer staff when they are in college.” The selection process is important, to make sure the staff are mature enough to model Christ-like behavior and the team concept. This has been very effective in developing community with young people, especially as they have invited teenagers to attend church worship with them.

Community can be taught with biblical teaching and verbal encouragement but the most effective “program” is demonstration by a community of adults who grasp the

vision and concept of the team of disciples. Community begins with small groups, which build security, and from that base of positive relationships, reach out to other generations and those who are outside their personal comfort zone.

A Program of Expression that Reaches Out to Youth Incarnationally

When young people get excited about faith and the community of friends that sincerely love them, outreach ministry cannot be stopped. Some will tell their friends. Some youth will go to their peer groups at school, work, team and neighborhood and express they have a sense of belonging they don't see anywhere else.

I prefer to call ministry to the unbeliever expression rather than many of the code words of the evangelical community. Expression better captures the concept that ministry overflows from a community in relationship as opposed to an action. The difference is being a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ as opposed to doing evangelism. Expression of faith overflows from the dynamic of relationship found in Jesus Christ. As personal needs of belonging, community and interaction in positive relationship are experienced by young people are met, most will naturally express it to the others in their lives.

It is the job of adults to facilitate age appropriate outlets for this type of ministry. A program that flows out of discerned needs of a specific age group is the most effective in accomplishing real outreach. For an active seventh grade boy it is quite different than a socially aware eleventh grade girl. Events that are easy to invite a personal friend are desirable. Possibly for that seventh grade boy, an afternoon of laser tag would be a good entry level program to bring an unchurched friend, while a simple get together at a youth group member's home would be a good plan for the eleventh grade girl.

To have specific youth embrace the vision of outreach engaged in events from the start can be advantageous. With the wise leadership of adults who know when to lead and when to empower youth to lead, a program of outreach can result in unchurched youth making the transition from a laser tag event or a party at a home to the Sunday evening fellowship night or even better the outreach weekend nobody wants to miss. In some events a brief message is appropriate, but not always necessary. If a young person shares a big weekend is coming up and all are invited, that may be the best form of outreach.

Dick Halverson taught there are two types of outreach ministry: strategic and spontaneous. These types of ministry are seen in the book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas planned missionary journeys to spread the Gospel to people in lands far away. They collected resources and made arrangements to visit those areas and planned how to communicate the Gospel to people from any country that had heard of Jesus Christ. That was strategic ministry, planned and prepared.

There is also spontaneous ministry in Acts, like when Peter, James and John are on their way to the Temple for a time of prayer. On their way, a lame man requests financial assistance resulting in healing, preaching and a clash with authorities. Many saw God's work and heard the Gospel in this spontaneous event. There was no strategy to make this happen; they were just being on their way. This spontaneous occurrence resulted in ministry. Both types of ministry reached people and were effective.

Leaders of youth need to help with both spontaneous and strategic ministry. By helping them see they go nowhere by accident and that God anoints their paths everyday—at school, at home, playing sports—they can understand that God puts people in their paths for a reason; they may be more open to see His hand in each relationship.

Strategic ministry, like lining up events (or empowering youth by helping them line up events) can be used to communicate Christ's love.

The hope expressed in outreach is that a group of young people who love Christ will bring their friends to the single purpose outreach event that is non-threatening and sensitive to the needs of youth today, with little or no pressure to join the church or feel they are second-class people. After connecting to people (Youth Family, as well as other young people) the hope is that the new unchurched teenager feels inclined to attend a deeper level event at the right time.

It would be foolish to think someone could discern spiritually where any young person really is. There must be a wariness of any level of Christian discipleship as this can be a form of putting young people under a legalism or the Law, whether realized or sub-conscious. Young people come to Christ and are immediately "willing to care," and others who seem to care express a year later they never really believed in Christ at all.

Other significant programs that need to be reviewed in are service events and the short-term mission trip. They need to help empower and develop people in a healthy way. This is one area of programming that allows for both the time to be with one's peer group and connect and experience dynamic healthy relationships in an intergenerational way. On a monthly basis, The Grate Patrol (some of the youth at the Falls Church) rise early (5:00 AM) and under supervision of qualified workers, deliver food to homeless individuals and groups that are tucked away in the bushes and underpasses of Washington, DC. As parents participate in driving and encouraging, youth hand over prepared sandwiches, meals and coffee to hurting men and women in the area. It is life-changing and a strong bonding time for parent and child.

The numerous issues of taking teenagers on overseas mission trips have always been a concern. The blessings at times seem to be outweighed by the hassles of parental worries and some attitudes in preparation for these trips. The needed shots and medical forms, as well as passports and qualifications of trips like these have always been stressors for any youth director who knows what's going on. That changes when it is families that are taking their own children on the out of country trips.

When families are directed to the trips sponsored by the mission department that includes all generations to Guatemala, Nicaragua, Dominica Republic and Kenya, and youth sponsored trips are located in the United States it gives young people the best of both worlds. This past summer just as many youth went with families on overseas trips as went to the urban center of Newark, NJ and rural Virginia. Some did both trips with their families and the youth group trip and experienced blessings on both trips.

Middle class youth need service events that bring them into contact with people with serious need. It helps them in numerous ways, if they are prepared. To have a consistent program that facilitates the youth group child to experience the tension of being in that environment produces wonderful outcomes. That is true for the family too.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Where Are Youth Today?

Youth are alienated throughout twenty-first-century American culture.

Commentators of youth culture recognize that youth are separated from the community around them. They desire intimate, real relationships, not unlike family relationships. It is a natural desire of humankind to crave relationship, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Humankind desires fellowship. Bonhoeffer's description of sacrificial community may resonate with them, but they need to see it, not just hear or read about it.

Avril Lavigne, a popular culture musician, expresses this loss of relationship and the strong need for acceptance by anyone in her song, *I'm with You*:

I'm looking for a place, searching for a face
Is there anybody here I know 'cause nothing's going right
And everything's a mess and no one likes to be alone
Isn't anyone trying to find me? Won't someone please take me home?
Won't you take me by the hand, take me somewhere new,
I don't know who you are, But I, I'm with you.¹

This cry for relational security shows desperation and a willingness to throw oneself into any crowd or relationship, even if it is destructive. Paul would have been there for Lavigne and over time, shared his life with her. That is the call of the youth worker.

Dean writes the cry of teenagers is, "Will you be there for me?"² Paul writes, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us (1 Thess 2:8)." That is what

¹ "I'm With You," Avril Lavigne, on *My Happy Ending* (New York: Arista), sound recording.

² Kenda Creasy Dean, *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 77.

youth crave and act out for—an adult to care for them. Paul understood the Gospel, but knew the heart must connect before the mind engages. He and his team shared life with the Church. The people of Thessalonica actually felt, heard, touched, watched and experienced the love of Christ through Paul, Timothy and Silas.

Elkind writes, “Our new family styles make it next to impossible for the majority of parents to provide the kind of childrearing that goes along with the image of children as in need of parental nurture.”³ He says the way families run in the United States misses important needs and bypasses the nurture necessary to develop youth as fully functioning adults. American adults have chosen a family style that leaves emotional, spiritual, social and mental gaps in their child’s development. These gaps are not necessarily filled by other communities and institutions. With the lack of familial support, youth turn to other places for support, comfort and belonging. Males writes youth are being ignored and blamed in our culture, “Teenagers are banished from public places by daytime and nighttime curfews and from commercial locales by commercial policies, age limits, and prohibitive admission prices. There are fewer places where they can gather at their own behest without harsh policies.”⁴

A Model of Ministry: Sharing Lives Not Just Messages and Programs

Some youth workers resort to running a program or giving a talk instead of relating closely to an adolescent. Paul shared his life with the Thessalonians; he did not simply run a Bible study, a Sunday school or a large outreach program. Like the angry

³ Elkind, *The Hurried Child*, xvi.

⁴ Males, *Framing Youth*, 72.

father who blows up after coming home from a hard day at work, hearing his child has misbehaved (or earned a poor grade or acted out in some fashion), a youth worker resorts to blasting a “challenging” talk to tell youth to “get it together.” This busy youth worker sees youth as “a problem to solve” rather than a “gift from God.” The father or youth worker can miss real needs of the young person because they need them to “act right.”

Clark writes, “Organizations, structures, and institutions that were originally concerned with children’s care, welfare, and development have become less interested in individual nurture and developmental concern and more interested in institutional perpetuation.”⁵ Fundamental needs of youth are ignored by contemporary youth ministries and community organizations. This emotional and spiritual abandonment by communities has caused youth to turn other places to have those needs fulfilled. The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) was originally founded to help young men grow spiritually and physically. YMCA has now become an inexpensive pool and gym membership for adults as much as children. Organized athletics and youth ministries seem to be more about parents and their bragging rights and less about kids having fun.

The school system has shifted to a system of grading, for students, teachers and administrators. Hestorff describes standardized testing as a “perpetuation of the institution.”⁶ Standardized testing was developed with the purpose of equal opportunity learning. However, a grade is now given to each school based on the number of students who pass standardized tests. A poor grade for a school results in less government funding. Teachers and administrators naturally become more concerned about the grade

⁵ Clark, *Hurt*, 45.

⁶ Hestorff, *Ym2k*, 7.

for the school and less concerned about individual students. Students, therefore, become a means of funding. They become more focused on achieving a grade than actual learning.

The church youth group has regrettably become something other than ministry to youth. Not only are youth left out of society, but out of the Church too. Dean writes, “The hemorrhage of adolescents from mainstream Protestantism began in the later 1950’s, and by century’s end had swelled to a full-fledged ecclesial crisis.”⁷ Half of Catholics who go to confirmation walk away within a few years.⁸ Churches are losing youth, and even the prediction that the teen population will rise in the next decade from 29 million to 36 million gives little hope they can be retained.⁹ The Church is losing the battle to keep its young people and its mission to convert young in America.

Youth ministries and youth ministers have seen the wide disconnect between the Church and adolescence and attempted to develop a ministry alongside the Church. Most have done this with little or no reflection, just to get kids involved. Most contemporary youth group activities are disassociated from the life of the church community. They are set and planned for students to be with their own age group. Parents are happy that their kids are just enjoying church and see little or no problem with this. The family drives to church together and then splits up into different parts of the building and program. The school system does it that way, so the church does it too. Few complain about this family separation on Sunday mornings.

⁷ Dean, *Practicing Passion*, 7.

⁸ Scott J. Jones and Bruce R. Ough, *The Future of the United Methodist Church: Seven Vision Pathways* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 30.

⁹ Dean, Clark and Rahn, *Starting*, 18.

This short-sighted view of separation may be due to laziness on the part of church leadership. The youth pastor is over-worked, busy and sometimes just does the program that was done before he was there. The thought of changing Sunday school is exhausting, if not impossible. It is difficult enough to encourage the turned off kid to be involved, or convey to church leadership the goal of developing community within the youth group.

Today's youth know when to perform for adults. Most who have worked with youth would say young people have become adept at saying and displaying what leaders want to hear and see, or at least create a role that helps them survive through a process when leaders are around. They have learned to change their tone and language when adults are around. The tone changes and language is cleaned up and sterilized for adults. These same adults write recommendations for school or jobs, so young people perform.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Gospel must be internalized in lives. Christians must live a blameless life and let God approve motives and actions. It begins with personal relationship with the Lord. Leaders cannot impart what they do not possess; they cannot give what they do not have.

Jesus chose twelve disciples to be with him (Mark 3:14). These men were to "be with him;" He was to "be with" them. The most important priority of ministry after relationship with Christ is people. Paul was called to minister to a group at Thessalonica. Jesus called twelve to follow him. With prayer and counsel Christians must consider who God is calling them to work with. Discipleship is not a gift to a few Christians but a command to all believers.

Third, youth leaders must invest in the relationships by sharing and giving our lives to those who we decide to disciple. We must not see ministry as simply a career, job, or a means to an end. We must develop eternal relationships that are intimate and Christ-centered. These relationships are to be like a mother nursing a baby with gentleness and respectfully directive like a father developing a son for life.

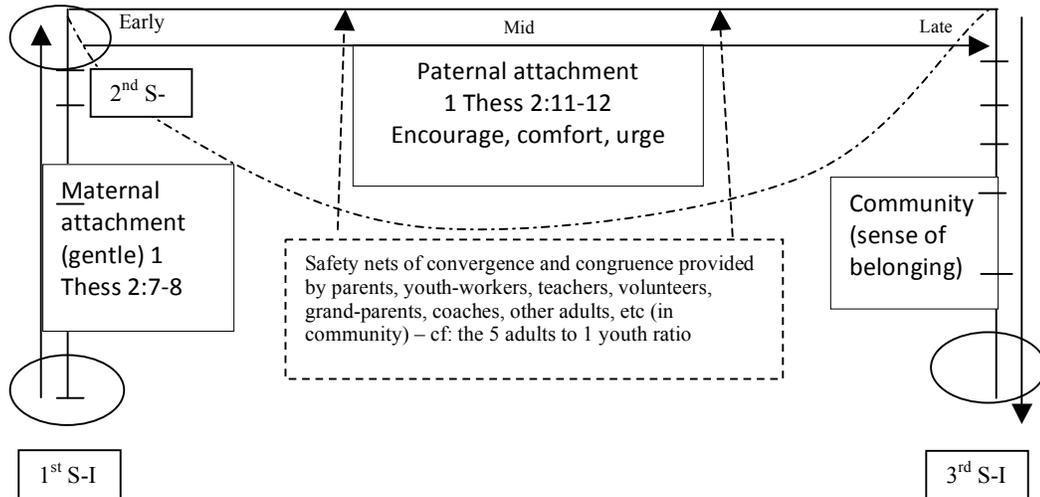
Fourth, we must bridge young people to the intergenerational church, not just to the youth group. It needs to be part of our vision, program, curriculum and teaching, and practiced as much as Scripture reading, worship, prayer and other disciplines. We should weekly take kids to the worship service.

When young people see adults in His Church who love Christ and express His grace and all encompassing love, they will be transformed. Our programs and "ministries" can be the bridge to those relationships, but not the end in themselves. We must love unconditionally, as Christ loves us unconditionally. No program, teaching, bible study, camp, retreat or event can replace that Christ-centered transformational relationship. There is no better model than the biblical model laid out in the Scripture, our method book. Jesus says to youth workers as he said to Peter, "Follow me and I will teach you to catch men (Mark 1:17)."

APPENDIX A

The Tightrope of Adolescence

Adolescent has to deal with tasks of identity, autonomy and belonging from 2nd S-I to 3rd S-I (process of individuation)



S-I= Separation-Individuation points or junctions

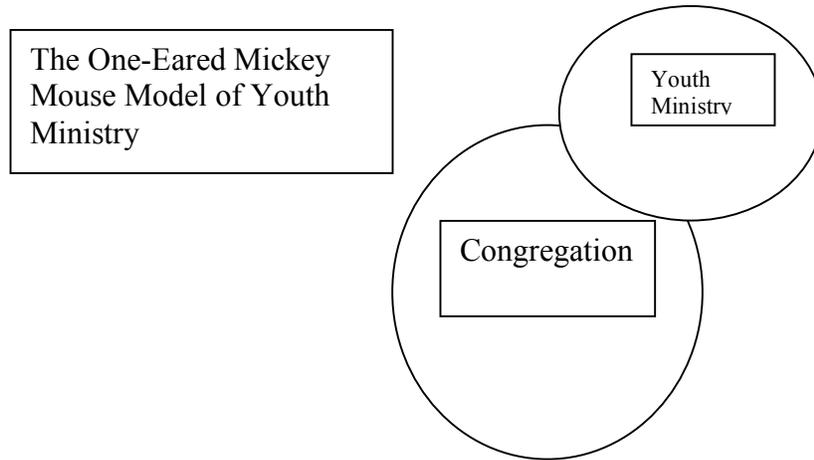
1st S-I : from infant to childhood

2nd S-I : at puberty

3rd S-I: at emerging adulthood

APPENDIX B

The One-Eared Mickey Mouse



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