



Review

What remains from last week?

What did you try to implement this week? How did it go?

Guiding Scriptures

Mark 5:1-20

Content

What challenges are you facing with your adolescent?

What fears do you have about adolescence?

Health, Diagnosis, Coaching Cycle

“Your daughter needs a wall to swim to, and she needs you to be a wall that can withstand her comings and goings. Some parents feel too hurt by their swimmers, take too personally their daughter’s rejections, and choose to make themselves unavailable to avoid going through it again ... But being unavailable comes at a cost ... Their daughters are left without a wall to swim to and must navigate choppy—and sometimes dangerous—waters all on their own.”

-Lisa Damour *Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood*

Differentiation

Murray Bowen, a psychiatrist and professor, who described differentiation as a person’s ability to “define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from the pressures of those around them. Differentiated people are able to maintain their own individuality while being connected to people important to them.

“There is one thing that differentiates those that emerge from adolescents healthy and those that don’t. The young person must be able to name 5 adults that would love them unconditionally. These 5 adults act as the foundation for the young person’s life. They form the ground upon which these young people can grow and build their lives.”

Dr. Chap Clark professor of youth and family culture at Fuller Seminary



Don't stop parenting.

“Children’s attachment to parents are no longer getting the support required from culture and society....The chief and most damaging of the competing attachments that undermine parenting authority and parental love is the increasing bonding of our children with their peers....Instead, children are being brought up by immature persons who cannot possibly guide them to maturity. They are being brought up by each other. The term that seems to fit this phenomenon more than any other is ‘peer orientation’

....

So ubiquitous is peer orientation that it has become the norm.”

Hold on to Your Kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers by Gordon Neufeld Ph.D, and Gabor Maté MD.

Response

Being the type of person they want to spend time with

- **Want to hang out with them! Be excited to be with them.**
- **Speak well of teenagers in front of teenagers.** Even better, believe they are created in God’s image.
- **Listen more than you talk.**
- **Enter their world rather than asking them to enter yours.**
- **Don’t use them for your gain.**
- **Take them serious..**

Help their faith become their own.

“A recent study found that 40 million young people raised in the Christian faith are likely to walk away from a life with God by 2050. I encounter these young people every day. In my experience, most do not reject the teachings of Jesus. Instead, they question the plausibility of following him because so many of the Christian communities they've inhabited do not seem to take Jesus seriously. The church may talk about love, justice, and fellowship, but what these young adults actually see are Christians consumed by anger, fear, and partisanship. As a result, American Christianity isn't facing a crisis of disbelief, but a crisis of disillusionment.”

- Skye Jethani

Religious and spiritual sensibilities decoupled from particular, institutional expressions results in an “unbundled” faith.



Faith unbundled is a term to describe the dynamic combination of commitments that result when young people combine, or bundle, the elements of their faith – including their own sense of beliefs, identity, practices, and community – from a variety of religious and non-religious sources, rather than receiving all these things from a single, intact system or tradition.

More than half of young people (53 percent) say “I agree with some, but not all, of the things my religion teaches” and “I don’t feel like I need to be connected to a specific religion” (55 percent). Nearly half of all young people (47 percent) say: “I feel like I could fit in with many different religions.”.....

To be most effective, those trusted adults need to understand and honor the new ways Gen Z is navigating questions of uncertainty; specifically, they need to understand the way young people’s religious, spiritual, and secular seeking is uniquely unbundled. Curiosity, wholeness, community, and flexibility are hallmarks of faith unbundled – the same qualities that guide young people pursuing and discerning religious questions.

Over half of young people said, “I do not like to be told answers about faith and religion, I’d rather discover my own answers” (58 percent), and that “religious communities try to fix my problem, instead of just being there for me.” Young people need relationships built on presence and listening, not advice and fixing. More than half of young people (51 percent) indicated that the most useful or important thing a person did to help them during uncertainty was to “just let me talk.”.....

Trust is low across almost every institution, and that trust has declined during the past few years of uncertainty. Rebuilding trust with young people will mean learning to respond to their doubts, questions, and experiences of uncertainty with listening and support – rather than answers or the reassurance of static certainty. Rebuilding trust will mean seeing young people’s curiosity as an asset to their religious and spiritual lives, not a liability.

–Josh Packard and Kevin Springer (Springtide Institute)

Response and Remedies:

To invest in kids, Dr. Clark recommended churches do more than provide a cool youth group and meaningful mission trips. Adults throughout the church should get to know teens by name and give them a safe place to be themselves. “The best thing about a church is that we get to parent each other’s kids in the best sense of the word,” he said.

As someone who has spent his career with high school, college, and seminary students, Dr. Clark said young adults need freedom to doubt. “The tighter a Christian family tries to control



their kids, the more they're gonna push against them," he said. "Engage kids in their complexity. They'll have a much better shot at their faith being livable in the long haul."

Thoughts on the church

1. We have been inconsistent in who God calls us to be- especially as it relates to our care for marginalized people.
2. As a result (young) people are rapidly leaving the church
3. It is not working. They are not finding more loving communities, more coherent worldview.
4. We must go back and clean up step 1. Not fight with them about step 3.

"It's time to reframe young people's questions and doubts not as challenges, but as opportunities. In both our Sticky Faith and Growing Young research, we found that feeling the freedom to express doubt was actually correlated with faith maturity. Put more simply, it's not doubt that's toxic to faith, it's silence."

Even if you and I can agree on both of those reasons to welcome young people's doubts, that doesn't mean we always know how to best respond. The way we respond to doubt sends a message about God. We've found that when leaders and parents tend to silence young people's doubts, young people not only learn that their church and family can't handle doubt; they think God can't handle doubt either."- Kara Powell, Fuller Youth Institute

4 steps to better handling young people's doubts

1. **Memorize this phrase: "Great question. I don't know, but ..."**
2. **Preserve the relationship at all cost.** I long for the church to be the first place young people go with their tough questions about God. But they will only head in our direction if they know that we will not reject them—no matter what. So when you're interacting with a young person who is doubting, go out of your way to show that you, and the community you are both part of, are not judging them, but journeying with them.
3. **Connect young people with other resources.**
4. **Pay attention to your own doubt.** If appropriate, share your own doubts with teenagers and young adults. Your example of being an adult who doesn't have faith despite doubt but has faith in the midst of doubt will give them hope for their own spiritual journey.

US teenagers who retain and grow in their faith are most significantly influenced by their parents. But there is a crucial second tier of relationships in their formation: nonfamilial adults who encourage them and speak into their lives. Those religiously serious teens they call "The



*Devoted...have a larger number of nonparental adults in their lives who they can turn to for support, advice, and help. Moreover, the parents of the more religiously serious teens are more likely to know more of the supportive adults in their teen children's lives well enough to talk to them, expanding what sociologists call 'network closure' around religious teens...In sum, the lives of more religious teens are, compared to less religious teens, statistically more likely...to be linked to and surrounded by adults, particularly nonparental adults who know and care about them and who themselves have **social ties to the teens' parents.**"*

Christian Smith, Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers, with Melinda Lundquist Denton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 226-227.

Resources:

- Fuller Youth Institute
 - Fulleryouthinstitute.org
 - 6 Tips for Talking with Teenager Girls
 - How to talk to young people about doubt
 - Growing With by Kara Powell and Steven Argue
 - Can I ask that? By Jim Candy and Brad Griffin
 - Hurt by Chap Clark
- Skye Jethani
 - With God Daily
 - The Holy Post Podcast
- Faith Unbundled
 - Josh Packard and Spingtide Institute
- Ten Questions Every Teenager Should Ask by Rebecca McLaughlin

Reflections and Commitments

What commitment am I willing to make?

AND one more from this list...

- What price am I willing to pay?
- What is the promise I'm willing to make that constitutes a risk or major shift for me?
- What is the promise I am unwilling to make?
- What is the crossroads you face at this stage of the game?
- What is the story you keep telling about the problems of parenting?
- What is your contribution to the very thing you complain about?