

# What Teenagers “Need.”

- Three different friends from three different churches contacted me recently discussing the issue of families leaving their churches because they weren’t providing enough for the children/teens.
- We need to be careful to start with Scripture and not culture. Many of the things we call “needs” aren’t based on what we see in Scripture or even on the fact that they “work.” We desire these things because our culture demands it, other churches are offering it, or our teens like it.

## 1. Parents who are:

- growing
  - Three times Paul urged, “Imitate me.” (I Cor 4:6; I Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17)
  - Ps 78 makes it clear, “If you’re going to teach about God you have to know him.”
- serious about God
  - Deut 4:24 “For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God
  - Our kids need to see that we can have more fun than anyone else around and that we are deadly serious about the things of God, too.
- walking in the spirit
  - Gal 5:16 – “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- teaching all the time
  - Eph 6:4 - Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord
  - Deut 6: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
  - You may not have a set “family devotional time” 7 days/week and yet you are still able to intentionally communicate with your family
- spending time
  - I believe in the importance of breaking down barriers, building trust, and making memories. Because those things are so important, let me encourage you as the **parents** to be the one taking your teens on trips and activities, and possibly even without all the other friends, so that you are the ones interacting with them, doing wise/grown up things, not just kid stuff.
  - i.e. Greg Harris & his sons

## 2. A church that is serious about the importance of church.

- Radically loyal commitment to the local church
- Many don’t see this modeled well, or hear it taught clearly. I want our teens to stay at HPBC after they graduate from high school.
- (Insert stats) 50-75 percent of churched young people leave – the faith.
- I’m not seeking to have a youth ministry that they will look back on and think, “I had an awesome youth ministry!” I want to have a youth ministry that prepares them to always say, “I am loyal to Christ and His church.”

- What we win them with, is what we win them to.
- A church that will provide accountability.
- We need to work hard at promoting Christian fellowship. True Christian fellowship revolves around Christ and His Word. We're trying to promote fellowship through SNACKs, prayer meetings, small group discussions in Sunday School, and occasional seminars.

### 3. Pastors who are intentional about ministering.

- To their parents
  - Eph 4:12 - to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
  - This is an area where I still feel slightly handicapped, and I know I need to grow in.
- To them
  - Again, we're trying to promote fellowship through SNACKs, prayer meetings, small group discussions in Sunday School, and occasional seminars.
- Not just entertaining them
  - Many churches that have been entertainment driven are having a wake-up call and changing their approach to a Biblical one. (i.e. *reThink*)
  - I have to make sure I'm doing the work that God through the Scriptures has made clear I am supposed to do.

### 4. To walk with the wise.

- Prov 13:20 - Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.
- We need to be aware that our children can just as easily hang out with the "wrong" kids as they can with the "good."
  - This happens at church and school all the time.
  - I want to say this kindly and lovingly, but this is why some of your kids have bad friends. It isn't that you sought out bad friends for them – it just happened.
  - I spoke to the teens in HP chapel recently about friendship and told them to make sure that friendships didn't just "happen" in their lives.
  - Social interaction and "hang out time" is often pooling ignorance and even ungodliness. If it isn't ungodliness, it may simply be non-godliness. I want my son to be wise and not destroyed. I can't expose him to lots of social interaction with his peers and expect that to be profitable.
  - Remember, God will provide what all of us, including your child, need - Phil 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
  - If they don't have Christian friends, they don't need them. Better to have no friends than the wrong ones.
  - Scripture makes it abundantly clear that the wrong kind of friends is potentially life threatening.
- The best relationship a 15 year old can make is one with a 30 or 50 year old. When Jay is 13, I want him to hang out with Dick Knox on a Saturday afternoon and go with one of our deacons to meet a widow's need and come with me while we go fishing with my unsaved neighbor. I don't envision him going to Myrtle Beach with his buddies for the weekend.
  - These kinds of relationships aren't going to just happen. It's going to take a lot of very uncomfortable work on the part of teens, parents, and the "old" people in our church. Parents are going to have to parent.

- I've never reared a teen. It wasn't too long ago, though, that I was one. I get to interact with them regularly and watch/listen to them socialize. I'm not sure that more time socializing is helpful, in fact I think it's possible that less time socializing with their peers and more time with wise people (like parents and other mature 30, 50, or 65 year olds) would be of great benefit.

#### **5. To be saved.**

- This is the last, but by far the most important and the most obvious.
- This is all of humanity's greatest "need."
- John 3:7 – "You must be born again."
- Everything else above can be "perfect," but without the work of God's Spirit in the life of a person – they won't desire God.
- There are really two groups of people in the world, and by extension, two groups of people in our youth ministry – saved and unsaved.
- I am trying to stop thinking of "good kids" and "bad kids" and start thinking, "saved" and "unsaved." The unsaved need the Holy Spirit to do His work of regeneration. The saved are on a continuum.
- There are probably still more of our teens that are unsaved than we'd care to realize.
  - Do they love the things of God?
  - Are they desirous of coming to church?
  - Do they want to grow?
  - Are they sensitive to sin in their lives?
  - Do they love others?

#### **Conclusion:**

By God's grace we can work together to rear our next generation of pastors, missionaries, deacons, disciple-makers (some of them may even do it as their occupation).