

## What Kid's wished their parents knew about Parenting....

***Don't forget we have books and to invite someone to church during this series for a chance to win a professional photo shoot!***

***Big Idea:***

***HOW do WE develop GOD'S PLAN for better Parenting?***

When I 1st got into ministry it was really obvious, that the problem with students was parents. Being 22 years old and astutely aware of the crisis gripping parents I felt the need to combat this impending tide of disaster.

Parents clearly couldn't parent. So I was going to have to teach them.

This period of my life I will refer to as youthful arrogance.

As I progress further in youth ministry, I believed it was more about teaming with parents. My goal was to be another spiritual guide the got alongside their children. But when you look at the statistics and the numbers, a youth pastor's interaction with students still very limited. When I think about teaming with parents it implies a 50-50 responsibility, which really isn't true when it comes to spiritual formation of students.

Then I had a child and realized I'm utterly clueless. So I began to study relentlessly, not for a formula or a program. What I was looking for was some simple principles to help steer all my constructive parenting.

*So here is my principle...*

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:5-9*

*My Goal as a Parent;*

*To create someone who is independent of my wife and me and fully dependent on Christ for everything.*

*So here are my promises today...*

1. A promise not to tell you how to parent your teenage children. Because I have no clue.
2. I promise to provide you with resources, information and the full text of this sermon to help you.
3. I will be speaking in general terms, taking a stereotypical look into student culture and generational distinctives.
4. I will provide some insights on connecting with students. As well as some insights on some critical values.

## **Facts/Insights.**

Broadly I want to look at Three generations, with a 4th being developed right now as babies.

### ***The Busters (Gen X: Born 1965 – 79)***

Relatively small generation that grew up as latch key kids. This was the generation that was a result of the pill, so many are a surprise or an accident.

1. Very individualistic, yet value relationships highly.
  2. Don't respect authority, but value instruction.
  3. Skeptical, but pragmatic.
  4. Extended adolescence, yet grow up too soon.
  5. Slow to commit, but passionately dedicated.
  6. Challenge to manage, but excellent workers.
  7. Apathetic, but care deeply.
  8. Relativistic, yet searching for meaning.
- Disillusioned, yet not giving up.

6 Key's for Gen X...

(1) serious about life; (2) stressed out; (3) self-reliant; (4) skeptical; (5) spiritual; and (6) survivors.

### ***Millennials (Gen Y: 1980 – 95)***

Grew up in a wealthy environment with a generation dedicated shopping, media and marketing. This is the first generation with the participation awards. Massive generation similar size to Boomers. There is a deep sense of entitlement within this generation.

1. Very Bonded with Parents, often enter workforce without having to make any real major decisions.
2. Enormous Self-Confidence. Instilled by both parents and schools.
3. Totally technologically connected.
4. Low tolerance for jobs and work environments that they deem unsatisfactory.
5. High Maintenance, require mentoring/coaching/interaction with predecessors.
6. Higher education is assumed.

### ***Digitals/ Silent Generation – (Gen Z: 1995-2009)***

The most recent generation. Born after 1994, this group has never known a world without technological advances such as the Internet and cell phones. Most are computer savvy by the time they enter school. Generation Z lacks listening and interpersonal skills but is technologically adept. This group prefers to interact with others through social networking, texting and virtual communication. They are used to instant satisfaction and have little patience for things that take time. This group only knows interactive workspaces, and touch-screen interfaces.

### ***Some Important Indicators...***

Identifying some generalizations across the generations.

Divorces has declined from 1980 from roughly 22% to roughly 17% in 2008.

Teen pregnancy has declined and so has abortions over the last 10 years.

Binge drinking is higher among 40 year olds than teenagers.

Sexual activity has declined among teenagers over the last 10 years. Roughly only 48% have reported sexual intercourse compared to 54% in 1991.

Sometime we know what is going on, and sometimes we don't. Right now it is quite a healthy time to be a teenager. They're wiser and more transparent decisions going on among teenagers today. Digital landscapes allow us more transparency with students.

### ***Some Key Insights...(Pulled from Almost Christian)***

*See also [youthandreligion.org](http://youthandreligion.org)*

#### ***Finding number 1: most US teenagers embrace some religious identity and are affiliated with a religious organization.***

More than 75% of the US teens between the ages of 13 and 17 call themselves Christians. Nearly 60% say they attend religious services at least monthly. A large minority about 40%, go to church at least weekly, pray at least daily, and are currently involved in a religious youth group. Slightly more than half 55% say they have made "a personal commitment to live life for God". In total, about half of US teens say religion is important in their lives.

#### ***Finding number 2: most US teenagers following their parent's footsteps when it comes to religion.***

Contrary to popular opinion, teenagers tend to go along with the religious beliefs and level commitment of their parents, not necessarily because they buy into it, but because they do not consider religion worth arguing about. Religion is seldom a source of conflict for teenagers. To an astonishing degree the evidence suggests that religious commitment, understanding, and practice amongst teenagers reflects that of their parents.

*"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction  
and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head  
and a chain to adorn your neck." Proverbs 1:8-9*

#### ***Finding number 3: while most US teenagers feel generally positive towards religion, religion is not a big deal to them.***

The vast majority of US teens view religion in the benignly positive light. Most youth believe religion has much to offer, and those who attend church tend to feel positively about their congregations. Almost all young people point to advantages and benefits religion offers individuals and/or our society. Most American teenagers

tend to view religion is very nice thing, but claim it doesn't concern them greatly. Or that religion has limited impact on the lives.

***Finding number 4: the vast majority of teenagers in the US say they are Christians.***

Popular assumptions about religious pluralism amongst American adolescents seem to be overstated. Three out of four US teenagers say that they are Christian (about half a Protestant and one quarter Catholic). The next largest group is young people who say they are not religious roughly 16%. The third-largest group is Mormons do account for roughly 2.5%.

***Finding number 5: the single most important influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is that parents.***

The best social predictor of what teenagers religious life will look like is to ask what her parents religious lives look like. By and large, notes the study, parents will get what they are and stop all grandparents, other relatives, mentors, and youth ministers may be very influential, parents are the most important in forming the children spirituality. The study states teenagers do not seem very reflective about or appreciative of this fact.

***Finding number 6: supply and demand matters to the spiritual lives of teenagers.***

The more available religiously grounded relationships, activities, programs, opportunities, and the challenges are for teenagers, the more likely they will be religiously engaged and invested. In other words congregations that prioritize youth ministry and support for their parents invest in trained and skilled youth group leaders to make serious efforts to engage and teach adolescents seem to be much more likely to draw you into their religious lives and to foster religious and spiritual maturity in the young members.

***Finding number 7: spiritual and religious understanding is very weak among American teenagers.***

The vast majority of US teenagers, are incredibly inarticulate about their faith, their religious beliefs and practices, and its meaning or place in their lives. One of the major hypotheses is that very few religious congregations and communities have provided opportunities to practice talking about their faith or provided opportunities to discuss faith. It was not because teenagers lack the ability to think and speak well.

***Finding number 8: teenagers tend to espouse a religious outlook that is distinct from the traditional faith commitments of most US religious traditions one that you might call “moralistic therapeutic deism”.***

Right now in the context of most congregations and denominations this thorn of theology is actively displacing traditional faith amongst conservatives, black, and mainline Protestants, Catholicism, and Judaism in the US. It is the new mainstream American religious faith for a culturally post-Christian, individualistic, mass consumer capitalist society. God is a kind butler and wants to give me nice things and make me happy.

***Finding number 9: religion doesn't claim teenagers time or attention, compared to other social institutions, activities and organizations.***

A number of institutions are so built into adolescence lives, school, the media, peer groups, that teenagers don't even think of them as holding sway over their schedules or decisions. They simply are, and teenagers participate in them because they are insidious and pervasive. Teenagers typically view religion, on the other hand, as optional; it is not, for many of them, just bear in the same way that media, school, and families are ever present. Religion rather functions as an add-on or an extracurricular activity that you might do if you had time.

***Finding number 10: highly religious teenagers appear to be doing much better in life than less religious teenagers.***

This seems to be a sizable and significant difference in the variety of important life outcomes between more or less religious teenagers in the United States. This supports the assumption that religious identities, organizations, and practices shape people's lives in important ways. What is important is there is a divisive opinion that teenagers are aliens. The truth is teenagers are in fact inextricably linked to adult world problems: furthermore most teens want and seek strong relationships with adults. We are in a unique position as a church to embrace youth, connect with adolescents, and strengthen ties between adults and teenagers.

## **Everything is on the Table Now What?**

1. New Tools: Technology isn't going away, we have people in third world countries with cell phones. It is assumed that people are technologically connected everywhere, with everyone all the time. You don't need to guard digital from this, you need to create spiritual disciplines surrounding this.
  - a. Check the cell phones for dinner and bed.

- b. Internet safety matters, set up boundaries and communicate where to go if there is an issue.
  - c. Redefine relationships to embrace online communities. Digitals are hanging out in that space.
- 2. Weak Chic: Digitals are the most willing to discuss issues, and deep issues. They have an new found openness and authenticity. They are the first generation that will willing accept broken and troubled leadership because there is an acceptance that we all have issues. It isn't shocking to discuss depression, masturbation, drug abuse, pornography and cutting. Students are open to deep issues and they know authenticity creates deep community. The problem is brokenness is the new cool for holy. We value a deep sense of authenticity above holiness. It is important to hold both in tension and make clear the fact that God through Jesus leads us to a brighter better more holy future. We can change through Christ.
- 3. Timeonomics: Time is a commodity, discipleship requires relationship. Relationship requires time, and this is the most important resource of a students. So don't waste it. Provide sanctuary in a breakneck world we need to provide sanctuary to slow and be with Jesus and listen and reflect.
- 4. Diminishing plausibility of Christianity: Students want to know that the bible is true, on who's authority and where is the power of scripture. If we live in a post-christian viewpoint where truth has become relative we need to re-establish the truth of scripture. This requires us to be apologetically astute and well informed. Students require us to be well informed and educated on how to communicate the Truth of Scripture and who bears the power of it.
- 5. Separation of Church and EVERYTHING: What was one of the key findings from "You Lost Me" was the inability for churches to connect with everyday life. Right now there is a separation and we need to demonstrate the practical connection of faith with everyday life. Especially in the field of Sexuality, Politic, Science and Vocation.

You need to have a well formed argument on Homosexuality. We are neither Red or Blue, we are a purple kingdom state. Scientifically Christ matters to Creation and a Calling into ministry is not the only acceptable call.

If we do not have well constructed and educated viewpoints on the answers to these questions we will end up with a generation of lost and ill informed souls.

## **Here is the bottom line...**

*We might have generational differences but the principle of God rings true...*

*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

*Our commitment to Christ impacts our children. They are aware of what we are doing and will imitate our faith.*

*This is such a big idea I want to make this call right now. If you haven't already signed up for Parentology 101 then please do so, and then as the worship team leads us come up the front and place it in the baskets.*

*Secondly make a decision to follow God's mandate and live out your faith authentically in front of your children. Let them see it is transformational.*

*Finally get educated, your spiritual temperature and knowledge is a direct reflection in your child's. Your kid doesn't know much about Jesus, then I guess the apple didn't fall far from the tree.*

***GOD'S PLAN for better Parenting is pretty clear, lets be bold in how we develop it!***

*There has been a mountain of information so to help you, I'll put my full text notes online so you can get them. It will have the appropriate links and insights to all the books I referenced and used.*

***Lets Pray...***



*Lord if our spiritual temperature is reflected in our children then I pray we run at 212 degrees. Lord may we wholeheartedly live our the Dueteronomic instruction and may Jesus pervasively invade every aspect of our lives.*

*Amen.*

## **Books**

***Almost Christian – Kendra Creasy Dean***

***You Lost Me – David Kinnaman***

***Realworld Parents – Mark Matlock***

***NSYR: Youth and Religion – [youthandreligion.org](http://youthandreligion.org)***