



Class Objectives – After this class you will be able to:

- Learners will be aware of distinctive experiences and traits of today’s young people.
- Learners will be challenged to engage culture in a thoughtful way with Christ-centered attitudes and motivation.
- Learners will be aware of the importance of an intergenerational community of believers around young people.
- Learners will see danger in thinking maturity in Christ is not a process.

Key Terms:

- Consumerism
- Cynicism
- Perfectionism
- Moralistic Therapeutic Deism
- Restorative Engagement
- SOAR
- Mentoring Communities
- Information-rich/Mentor-poor
- Helicopter Parent
- Hospitality

Pre-lesson Recommended Reading:

- Chapters 23-25 of M. Anthony’s *Introducing Christian Education*:
 - i. Rahn, Dave. (pp. 217-226). Ministry to Youth.
 - ii. Davies, James A. (pp. 227-236). Adult Ministries.
 - iii. Black, Wesley. (pp. 237-246). Generational Perspectives: Ministering to Builders, Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers.
- Chapter 11-12 of R. Habermas’ *Teaching for Reconciliation*.
- Keyes.

Educational Ministry with Youth and Adults

I. A Few Good Resources

II. The Culture of Consumerism: If nothing is absolute (except your valuable time), everything is negotiable.

A. Characteristics of the Consuming Lifestyle

1. Idealize your favorite time and place
2. Buy your favorite things
3. Listen to your favorite music
4. Watch (or make) your favorite film
5. Eat your favorite food, OUT
6. Hang out with your favorite people (on MySpace)
7. Post (or not) on your favorite blog

<http://postsecret.blogspot.com>

http://www.allamericanrejects.com/media_music.asp

8. Maximize your experiences
9. IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!! (Whatever)

B. *Affluenza*

1. "Parents' facilitation of teen and tween consumption may have less to do with guilt than with the desire to provide a better life for their children. It could be merely an unthinking perpetuation of their own affliction of affluenza. Teens and tweens lean on consumption as a crutch in the absence of mutual obligations to family and community" (Bierma).

2. Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers
moralistic therapeutic deism

"God is like finding 50 dollars on the floor"

"God is good, and so am I"

"God's will is my happiness"

mass-consumer capitalism

individual

- autonomous
- rationalistic
- self-seeking
- cost-benefit-calculating

C. Possible Responses to the Consuming Lifestyle

1. Perfectionism or cynicism
 - perfectionism: everything is important
 - cynicism: everything is a joke
2. Spectrum of responses

Possible Christian Responses



- Full avoidance
- Cautious (moral) involvement
- Limited (evangelistic) involvement
- "Christian" pop
- Thoughtless immersion

***Restorative engagement**

Adapted from Denis Haack www.ransomfellowship.org

3. Restorative engagement: Christ's call to follow him into the world but not be of the world
 - John 17
 - Acts 17

Biblical Case Study: Paul in Athens

- Acts 17:16 God stirs up Christ-centered distress that leads to cultural engagement not self-centered offense that leads to to cultural withdrawal

Avoidance-----Restorative Engagement-----Immersion
(In but not of)

- 17:17 God provides courage and strength to sustain His humble servant in order to...?
- 17:22 God provides creational points of contact with others in culture in order to...?
- 17:23 God gives knowledge and understanding of culture to His humble servants in order to...?
- 17:32-34 God brings glory to Himself by yielding fruit from the labors of His humble servants.

4. Tools for Restorative engagement

SOAR: Survey, Observe, Analyze, Respond

III. Young Adults Today:

A. Lack of Mentoring Communities

1. “The central task of young adulthood is to discover and compose a faith that can orient the soul to truth and shape a fitting relationship between self and other, self and world, and self and God” (Parks).
2. “Are we asking enough questions, and are the questions we ask big enough?” (Parks).
3. “Too many of our young adults are not being encouraged to ask big questions that awaken critical thought. They are swept in religious assumptions that remain unexamined economic assumptions that function religiously. They become vulnerable to the conventional cynicism for our time or to the economic and political agendas of a consumption-driven yet ambivalent age” (Parks).
4. “Students receive extensive and rapid exposure to a vast and ever-increasing level of informational activity, which makes them the most informed generation to have lived on the planet. However, life management skills are frequently deficient because they have received less hands-on mentoring from parents and other adult figures. This comes at exactly the time when they are under pressure to demonstrate these skills in order to advance their career opportunities” (Newton).

5. “No one has ever asked me to think coherently about my entire experience here at college and tell a story about my experience. You are the first adult who has ever asked me” (Harvard student).
 6. “I wish I could forget all this pressure and major in something I really like and then do what I really want to do with my life. Oh well, what can you do.” (college student)
- B. Culture of Fear
1. Extremely parented
 2. Security since September 11
 3. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
- C. Busyness
- D. Performance Driven and Standardized Tested

IV. Considerations for Ministry:

- A. Socialized to think there is one right answer for every question
- B. Hospitality
- C. Community
- D. Meta-narrative of Scripture
- E. Transcultural Nature of the Gospel

V. People of All Generations are in Process:

- A. Philippians 1:6 – “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- B. “People can change, and those changes, not just the accumulation of information, represent true learning. More than anything else, this central set of beliefs distinguishes the most effective set of teachers from many of their colleagues” (Bain).

Please **PAUSE** the recording and complete the following **Activity** (12.1).

Think of two or three people you would say are mature. Now take a few minutes to brainstorm and write down the characteristics of these people that you would say exemplify their maturity.

Read two or three of the following scripture passages and any new characteristics you think of that you would say exemplify maturity: Ephesians 4:17-5:2, Matthew 5:1-16, 2 Timothy 1:3-14, Proverbs 3:1-23, Philippians 2:1-18, Romans 15:1-13.

C. Discussion of Maturity in Christ

1. Process
2. Body of Christ
3. Importance of indicatives before the imperatives

Please complete the following **Activity** (12.2).

Find a magazine advertisement that would lend itself towards the topic of consumerism. Form a group with at least two young people between the ages of 13 and 24; show them the advertisement and lead them through the following questions.

1. Survey: What is this?
2. Observe: What do you observe?
3. Analyze: What do you affirm about this? Why? What do you challenge? Why?
4. Respond: How do you communicate and live out your response to this advertisement in the world?

VI. Questions for Consideration:

1. Why is it important to remember that maturity in Christ is a process?
2. How does the concept of maturity in Christ as a community endeavor, not just an individual endeavor, change the way you think about maturity in Christ?

VII. Recommended Reading:

1. Goodman, E. "Are we protecting our teens or stalking them?" Sat., Nov. 03, 2007
2. Howe and Strauss. *Millennials Go to College*.
3. Currie, Elliot. *The Road to Whatever: Middle Class Culture and the Crisis of Adolescence*.
4. PBS's *Affluenza*
5. Smith, Christian. *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*.
6. Winter, Richard. *Perfecting ourselves to death*.
7. Keyes, Dick. *Seeing through Cynicism: A Reconsideration of the Power of Suspicion*.
8. Parks, Sharon. *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*.
9. Ashworth, Andy. *Real Love for Real Life: The Art and Work of Caring*.
10. Pohl, Christine. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*.
11. Bain, Ken. *What the Best College Teachers Do*.