Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World

The 12/25 Challenge
Reaching the Youth Generation

Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 52

Produced by the Issue Group on this topic at the
2004 Forum for World Evangelization hosted by the

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

In Pattaya, Thailand, September 29 to October 5, 2004

"A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call"

Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) No. 52
This Issue Group on Reaching the Youth Generation was Issue Group No. 23
(there were 31 Issue Groups at the Forum)

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The context for the production of the Lausanne Occasional Papers

The Lausanne Movement is an international movement committed to energising
"the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world."

With roots going back to the historical conferences in Edinburgh (1910) and Berlin (1966), the Lausanne Movement was born out of the First International Congress on World Evangelization called by evangelist Billy Graham held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974. The landmark outcome of this Congress was the **Lausanne Covenant** supported by the 2,430 participants from 150 nations. The covenant proclaims the substance of the Christian faith as historically declared in the creeds and adds a clear missional dimension to our faith. Many activities have emerged from the Lausanne Congress and from the second congress held in Manila in 1989. The Covenant (in a number of languages), and details about the many regional events and specialised conferences which have been undertaken in the name of Lausanne, may be examined online at www.lausanne.org.

The Lausanne International Committee believed it was led by the Holy Spirit to hold another conference which would bring together Christian leaders from around the world. This time the Committee planned to have younger emerging leaders involved and sought funds to enable it to bring a significant contingent from those parts of the world where the church is rapidly growing today. It decided to call the conference a **Forum.** As a Forum its structure would allow people to come and participate if they had something to contribute to one of 31 issues (around which were formed Issue Groups). These issues were chosen through a global research programme seeking to identify the most significant issues in the world today which are of concern in our task to take the *good news* to the world.

This Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) is the report that has emerged from one of these Issue Groups. LOPs have been produced for each of the Issue Groups and information on these and other publications may be obtained online at www.lausanne.org.

The theme of the Forum for World Evangelization held in 2004 was **"A new vision, a new heart, a renewed call."** This Forum was held in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29 to October 5, 2004. 1,530 participants came from 130 countries to work in one of the 31 Issue Groups.

The Affirmations at the conclusion of the Forum stated:

"There has been a spirit of working together in serious dialogue and prayerful reflection. Representatives from a wide spectrum of cultures and virtually all parts of the world have come together to learn from one another and to seek new direction from the Holy Spirit for world evangelization. They committed themselves to joint action under divine guidance.

The dramatic change in the political and economic landscape in recent years has raised new challenges in evangelization for the church. The polarization between east and west makes it imperative that the church seek God's direction for the appropriate responses to the present challenges.

In the 31 Issue Groups these new realities were taken into consideration, including the HIV pandemic, terrorism, globalization, the global role of media, poverty, persecution of Christians, fragmented families, political and religious nationalism, post-modern mind set, oppression of children, urbanization, neglect of the disabled and others.

Great progress was made in these groups as they grappled for solutions to the key challenges of world evangelization. As these groups focused on making specific recommendations, larger strategic themes came to the forefront.

There was affirmation that major efforts of the church must be directed toward those who have no access to the gospel. The commitment to help establish self sustaining churches within 6,000 remaining unreached people groups remains a central priority.

Secondly, the words of our Lord call us to love our neighbour as ourselves. In this we have failed greatly. We renew our commitment to reach out in love and compassion to those who are marginalised because of disabilities or who have different lifestyles and spiritual

perspectives. We commit to reach out to children and young people who constitute a majority of the world's population, many of whom are being abused, forced into slavery, armies and child labour.

A third stream of a strategic nature acknowledges that the growth of the church is now accelerating outside of the western world. Through the participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, we recognise the dynamic nature and rapid growth of the church in the *South*. Church leaders from the *South* are increasingly providing exemplary leadership in world evangelization.

Fourthly, we acknowledge the reality that much of the world is made up of oral learners who understand best when information comes to them by means of stories. A large proportion of the world's populations are either unable to or unwilling to absorb information through written communications. Therefore, a need exists to share the "Good News" and to disciple new Christians in story form and parables.

Fifthly, we call on the church to use media to effectively engage the culture in ways that draw non-believers toward spiritual truth and to proclaim Jesus Christ in culturally relevant ways.

Finally, we affirm the priesthood of all believers and call on the church to equip, encourage and empower women, men and youth to fulfil their calling as witnesses and co-labourers in the world wide task of evangelization.

Transformation was a theme which emerged from the working groups. We acknowledge our own need to be continually transformed, to continue to open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to the challenges of God's word and to grow in Christ together with fellow Christians in ways that result in social and economic transformation. We acknowledge that the scope of the gospel and building the Kingdom of God involves, body, mind, soul and spirit. Therefore we call for increasing integration of service to society and proclamation of the gospel.

We pray for those around the world who are being persecuted for their faith and for those who live in constant fear of their lives. We uphold our brothers and sisters who are suffering. We recognize that the reality of the persecuted church needs to be increasingly on the agenda of the whole Body of Christ. At the same time, we also acknowledge the importance of loving and doing good to our enemies while we fight for the right of freedom of conscience everywhere.

We are deeply moved by the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – the greatest human emergency in history. The Lausanne movement calls all churches everywhere to prayer and holistic response to this plague.

"9/11," the war in Iraq, the war on terror and its reprisals compel us to state that we must not allow the gospel or the Christian faith to be captive to any one geo-political entity. We affirm that the Christian faith is above all political entities.

We are concerned and mourn the death and destruction caused by all conflicts, terrorism and war. We call for Christians to pray for peace, to be proactively involved in reconciliation and avoid all attempts to turn any conflict into a religious war. Christian mission in this context lies in becoming peacemakers.

We pray for peace and reconciliation and God's guidance in how to bring about peace through our work of evangelization. We pray for God to work in the affairs of nations to open doors of opportunity for the gospel. We call on the church to mobilize every believer to focus specific consistent prayer for the evangelization of their communities and the world.

In this Forum we have experienced the partnership of men and women working together. We call on the church around the world to work towards full partnership of men and women in the work of world evangelism by maximising the gifts of all.

We also recognize the need for greater intentionality in developing future leaders. We call on the church to find creative ways to release emerging leaders to serve effectively."

Numerous practical recommendations for local churches to consider were offered. These will be available on the Lausanne website and in the Lausanne Occasional Papers. It is our prayer that these many case studies and action plans will be used of God to mobilise the church to share a clear and relevant message using a variety of methods to reach the

most neglected or resistant groups so that everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel message and be able to respond to this good news in faith.

We express our gratitude to the Thai Church which has hosted us and to their welcoming presentation to the Forum. We are profoundly gratefully to God for the privilege of being able to gather here from the four corners of the earth. We have developed new partnerships, made new friends and encouraged one another in our various ministries. Not withstanding the resistance to the gospel in many places and the richness of an inherited religious and cultural tradition we here at the Forum have accepted afresh the renewed call to be obedient to the mandate of Christ. We commit ourselves to making His saving love known so that the whole world may have opportunity to accept God's gift of salvation through Christ."

These affirmations indicate the response of the participants to the Forum outcomes and their longing that the whole church may be motivated by the outcomes of the Forum to strengthen its determination to be obedient to God's calling.

May the case studies and the practical suggestions in this and the other LOPs be of great help to you and your church as you seek to find new ways and a renewed call to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ

David Claydon

CONTENTS

Preface

As part of the Lausanne hosted Forum in Pattaya, Thailand, Sept 29-Oct 6th, 43 youth leaders from 23 countries in all continents gathered to share, pray, discuss and plan together ways of reaching the youth generation world wide with the good news of Jesus Christ.

It was our desire to understand the ways in which young people live, think, feel and communicate and to learn from one another and the church worldwide how the young generation can be reached authentically and effectively with the gospel. In our reflections and deliberations, we were inspired and guided by the great commission which our Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples and through them to His followers in every generation to *"Go into all the world and make disciples of all peoples…"* (Matthew 28:18ff). Certainly the young generation today – and tomorrow – is included in this great commission of Jesus.

As we discussed ways of "Reaching the Youth Generation", we were guided by a number of thoughts and fundamental principles, such as:

The realization that our world is made up of a great number of **people groups, cultures and sub-cultures**, all of which are entitled to hear the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ to redeem the lost and to restore the broken to Himself.

The understanding that within modern and post-modern society, not only in the West, but also in varying degrees in other parts of the world, there is a **generation gap** with the result that a specific and particular youth culture is emerging. We believe that the gospel message needs to be translated into every culture and subculture so that people may believe and commit their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we seek to understand the questions and life issues, the dreams and hopes, the fear and the wounds of the young generation in order minister more authentically and truthfully to the future generation. We refer in the title to the 12/25 challenge, because as we prayed and discussed, deliberated and formulated, created visions and heard God's challenge to us, we always had before us the hopes, dreams and frustrations of the young generation between 12 and 25 years of age.

We pray that God's Spirit will use what we have shared with one another and now share through this Lausanne Occasional Paper with the church around the world, to bless and inspire all of us to work and pray so that young people everywhere may be reached and transformed by the truth, the power and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that what is presented here is only a first step to further deliberations and in-depth study. Because of the make-up of our issue group, not all parts of the world were equally represented. Some countries or even regions, like e.g. the Near East, were not represented at all. There was one member from Latin America and China respectively, etc. We therefore realize and warn the reader that this report is not entirely representative or exhaustive, but rather exemplary. Some of the "case studies", "personal stories" and "perspectives" carry a distinct regional, local or even personal flavour, which we thought worth retaining to add flesh and meat to the bones. In presenting this report, in spite of the obvious limitations that we are aware of, still it is our conviction that what we were able to bring to the table together combines to become an important and urgent message to the church of Jesus Christ to consider, pray and act for the benefit of the emerging generation.

Introduction: Passion for the Young Generation

We are called to develop a passion for the young generation.

What is the generation like? They are a generation of unbounding energy, a generation with high powered creativity, a generation characterized by existential questions, a generation with immense potential, the largest generation world-wide. They will influence our world in a decisive way and lead our churches.

In a world that is changing in an ever faster pace, the emerging generation of young people needs security in order to be able to develop and use their gifts and potential. This is the responsibility of the older generation, and this is the challenge to the world wide church today. The youth generation is growing up under difficult conditions, in the West in material affluence and spiritually in great need, in other parts of the world in poverty and uncertainty and yet full of hopes for the future.

Young people today are searching for models and examples in a world full of options and disillusions. In their search for happiness they become spiritual and religious pilgrims in a desert of spiritual options. A lot of young people ask for the meaning and purpose of their lives, like e.g. sixteen year old Katharina from Germany. In a poem she writes:

> "Why do I still live in this world?
> Where everybody hates me
> What is it that keeps me alive?
> Why can you not leave me in peace?
> What meaning does this life have?
> Why is my life not also a blessing?
> I don't want to live any more
> I have got no strength for tomorrow
> Having to give out at all times
> And perpetual worries
> It kills me
> I am alive – but why?"

1. An Overview: Youth is today's church!

The 12/25 generation are part of the local church and part of the world-wide body of Christ. This means that the church carries a responsibility for young people in their town or village. Working with youth is not an option within the work of the church, but a commission of God! This commission is a challenge and a chance at the same time.

A lot of young people have grown up in broken families and have never experienced adults who really care for them, nor take time and listen to their questions and problems. Young people find themselves in a time of change: physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual change which is easy neither for themselves nor for the people around them. It is a time of important decisions in areas such as career, marriage, personality and many young people are looking for help and mentoring in this.

The natural and necessary detachment from their families or tribes automatically means a search for a new connection with their peers, which is a normal and correct consequence. Yet it is here that great problems arise, because many churches do not offer groups suited for young people, so they are looking for other groups such as clubs, cliques or gangs, where they find social connection. The result of this is often scaring. Young people try to fill their inner void with money, sex, sports, drugs or the pursuit of a career and are drawn into an ever more rapid cycle of frustration and hopelessness.

In no other phase are questions for the meaning of life more pronounced than during the age span of 12 to 25. "Who am I?" "Why do I live?" "How do others around me see me?" These existential questions are enormously important for young people and they desire nothing more than to be taken seriously - in their dreams, problems, fears and hopes. Where is the space and place where they are welcomed with their questions and crises? Who has time for them and takes with them seriously?

What do young people feel when they come into the church? Do they feel accepted? Do they have a place in our services? Young people do not only want to hear about faith in our churches, but to see, taste and feel it. They are looking for role models on which to orient themselves, who accept and correct, support and release them. There is no better place for young people than the church of Jesus Christ, because Jesus desires to give them just that which they are lacking, because Jesus came exactly for their needs and questions and wants to meet them in all the questions and changes of their lives.

The commission to reach the 12/25 generation is one which Jesus has entrusted to his church and which the church world-wide has to fulfil today. Youth work is an important, responsible and wonderful part of this commission. To help young people to find God and themselves, to walk alongside them on their life journey and to be a role model for them. Just imagine the potential that is found in a real encounter of the young generation with God!

2. Biblical Foundations

2.1 Biblical Precedent

Ministry to and with young people has *enormous* Biblical precedent. Throughout the Bible we find young people used by God, including such prominent figures as Joseph, Josiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Mary, John Mark and Timothy. God works in and through young people. If we are to do what we see the Father doing, the church must make it a priority to draw youth into His Kingdom and train them up as disciples.

The Old Testament is clear in its admonishment to make sure that young people are taught the precepts of God. God called Israel to teach their young to obey and revere the Lord. (Deuteronomy 4:9-10). Deuteronomy 6 indicates that great effort should be taken to ensure that the word of God is passed on to the next generation. (see also Exodus 11, 13). Psalms repetitively declares that God should be made known to future generations (Psalms 22:30, 33:11, 100:5, 102:12). Joel 1:3 succinctly summarizes the mandate to pass God's prophetic word on to younger generations: "*Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation.*" We are to "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it*" (Proverbs 22:6). God's people are admonished: "*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth!*" (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

In the New Testament, Jesus also emphasizes the importance of youth ministry. Each of the Synoptic Gospels records Him calling the children to come to Him. Jesus ministered to young people and with young people. He was quite young during His earthly ministry! Throughout His time on earth, Jesus contextualized his ministry to whomever He was approaching, including young people. Paul followed suit, as he specialized his ministry in order to effectively communicate the gospel to the Gentiles: "*I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some*" (1 Corinthians 9:22). We must adopt the same missionary mindset as we seek to reach young people, so that future generations will know that "*the Lord is good…and his faithfulness continues through all generations*" (Psalm 100:5). A young minister is encouraged: "*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*" (1Timothy 4:12)

2.2 Incarnational Theology

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the foundation for a theology of youth ministry. Jesus set an example for us when He became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood (John 1:14 as stated in *The Message*). Jesus set aside His divinity in order to enter a particular human culture. He did not minister from afar, but took on the life and limitations of humanity in order to share the Good News of salvation with us in a way we could easily understand and grasp. In Philippians 2:7, we see that Jesus "*made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*" By becoming incarnate in humanity, Jesus was the first real missionary. Since youth culture is clearly distinct from adult culture, youth ministry is actually a *missionary* endeavour. Youth workers, like all missionaries, must follow Jesus' incarnational example by going to the world of young people and seeking to share the gospel message in a way that it can be easily understood and received.

2.3 Relational Method

The primary method of sharing the gospel with young people in a way that it can be easily received is through the development of personal relationships. Thus, an incarnational theology of youth ministry leads naturally to a relational method of youth ministry. Youth are hungry for friends and mentors who will affirm their value and worth and help them form their identity. Youth ministry is not primarily about designing the most interesting and dynamic program or service. It is about pouring one's life into a young person, showing them the love of Christ through authentic personal relationships and helping those who respond to the gospel to reach out to their peers. Jesus Himself used a relational method. He did not train

His disciples in a vacuum, but in the context of intentional and loving community. He continues to do so with us, His followers, today.

2.4 Holistic impact

Ministry to young people must also be holistic, as we see in Jesus' own earthly ministry. The gospel brings transformation in all areas of human need: emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual and social. Jesus was very clear about the fact that His ministry was touch all areas of life when He cited Isaiah 61:1-2. His mission was to bring good news to the poor, to comfort the desperate, to free the prisoners and to release the guilty (Luke 4). In Jesus, God becomes man and meets the basic needs of human beings. Just before Jesus goes back to His Father again, He turns this mission over to His disciples: "*As the father has sent me, I am sending you*" (John 20:21). Jesus, the only whole and complete human being, sends us to minister to the whole humanity of young people. Just as Jesus ministered to the needs of the whole person, youth ministry must address the needs of young people in every sphere of life.

2.5 Further Theological and Practical Reflection

We have seen in 2.1 that the Old Testament is clear in its admonishment to make sure that children are taught the precepts of God. Did the Old Testament writers envision youth ministry as we do it today? Probably not. Yet the message is clear that God expects and demands that specific effort be made to make Him known to subsequent generations.

Our work today in specialized youth ministry is our effort to put this principle into practice so that future generations will know God, His truth and goodness and find redemption and healing in Him. Evangelistic outreach to youth requires ministry and communication across (sub) cultural barriers. It is apostolic mission. Therefore, an appropriate theological guideline is found in the Incarnation.

God became human in the person of Jesus Christ. That basic statement is both a theological doctrine and a model for ministry.

Firstly, the incarnation took place in a particular culture. Jesus was a Jewish carpenter, taking on the limitations of culture.

Secondly, crossing barriers, particularly cultural barriers, requires a willingness to empty ourselves and to die to ourselves. Philippians 2 praises Jesus for His willingness to forsake glory for our salvation. We are called to do no less for others.

Thirdly, death allows for the possibility of resurrection, with a new identity that is tied to God's kingdom. So, those of us called by God to reach the youth generation are, likewise, called to the youth culture. We enter it, emptying ourselves. We willingly die to ourselves for the sake of others in hope that through the process of incarnational ministry a new generation of Christ's disciples will rise up.

2.6 Cultural Barriers of the Church over against the Youth Culture

In general, there are four cultural barriers facing the church in ministry with youth.

Firstly, there is a **church versus unchurched** barrier. The vast majority of youth in the world are unchurched and do not readily understand or care about the church's message.

Secondly, in the Western world there is a **modern versus postmodern** divide. Much of the church continues to hold to formulations of doctrine that were a response to modern issues. They served their time well. Today's youth has a postmodern sensibility and traditional ways of explaining the gospel message typically do not answer the questions that many youth have.

Thirdly, there is a **technological gap**. The advent of computers and the internet have changed the way people communicate and think. The church often lags behind.

Fourthly, there is an age or **generational gap**. The result of this is a cultural divide. We have a missiological task before us. As with any other missional work, we must employ the forms of the culture in order to communicate the meaning of the gospel.

Thus reaching the youth generation means translating the message of the gospel into cultural forms that are understandable to youth. We must be at the forefront with music and the arts. We need to understand new ways of thinking and new ways of communicating. The church cannot be afraid of or ignore the youth culture. We must engage the culture. To

engage has a variety of meanings, including to attract, to bring into conflict, and to interlock. The gospel unearths the truth that exists in a culture. The gospel also identifies the sin of a culture. To be understood, the gospel must be embodied in a culture. When the gospel engages culture, the culture is transformed into what it was truly meant to be: a vehicle to communicate God's.

2.7 A Vision of Renewal by Reaching the Youth Generation

It is our vision for the church to see that the effort to reach a generation for Jesus Christ is bigger than any one generation. What we do today has implications for how future generations will be reached. The history of the church reveals how certain generational waves change the church in some fashion, often bringing renewal. We envision that reaching the youth generation will bring renewal in the following ways.

Firstly, there will be a **renewal of community**, a rediscovery of the relational dimension of the gospel. Today's youth can help us all move away from an overly privatized faith into a more communally centred soteriology.

Secondly, efforts to reach the youth generation have the potential to push the church to **remarry spiritual concerns and social action**.

Thirdly, the church must be marked by **cultural engagement**. The church cannot be afraid of or ignore culture. It must engage it. One of the principle places the church can do this is in reaching youth.

The church needs to operate from an ecclesiology that is truly Biblically based, rather than one tied to any one particular traditional cultural form. The church is called to a new way of functioning, to live out the "plausibility structure" of the gospel in order to provide a credible witness to the culture. It must no longer abdicate its role in the public debate of ideas. In order for the church to bring glory to God, there must be quality worship, fellowship and witness.[1]

What does this mean in terms of evangelistically reaching young people? It means living a worship that is real and relevant: Real in that it expresses both joys and struggles, relevant in that it is done with culturally relevant music and art and does not rely merely on propositional communication.

Also, the fellowship of the church must underscore the relational side of salvation. Youth need a place where they can be restored and reconciled to other people and to God. They desire leadership that allows the freedom to exercise creativity and the opportunity to enter into committed mentoring relationships.

Finally, vital worship and fellowship motivate a compelling witness, a witness expressed in evangelism, service, and justice. Youth want a witness that moves beyond propositional truth. They need to know that Christianity works in both the societal and personal issues of life.

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[1] Howard Snyder, <u>Radical Renewal: The Problem of Wineskins Today</u>, is helpful in a sketching a way the church can make this happen.

3. The Contexts of Youth Ministry Worldwide

Obviously youth around the world, while sharing some commonalities, live in a limitless number of contexts. From the urban areas of Asia to the rural farms of America and from the war torn regions of Africa to the relative freedom of Europe, the young generation experiences life in ways that are unavoidably linked to their living conditions and situations.

To effectively reach and disciple the 12/25 generation, it is necessary to evaluate the contexts that impact the way that they see themselves and their world. Following are some questions to ask and research about the environment and realities in which youth live that will aid in doing impactful and holistic ministry. Such a research might be called a "cultural exegesis".

3.1 Questions concerning Social and Political Contexts

What is their setting? Are they living in urban, suburban, rural, or other areas? What is the degree of a generation gap? How accurately do the older generations understand the younger generations and how well do the youth understand their elders? What are the economic realities? What is the level of wealth or poverty of the family and community? What is the political situation in which they live? How free are they and what is the threat of war? What is their educational level, quality, and prospects for further education? How much impact does juvenile delinquency or violence have in their lives? What are the health issues they are facing? Who are the main authority figures in their society? Do elders, government, church leaders, etc., have a high degree of control?

What is their understanding of and experience with sexuality? Who is influencing their sexual development in healthy and unhealthy ways? What racial issues impact the young people?

3.2 Questions concerning Family Contexts

What is their family situation? Who do they live with and what types of family issues or problems do they face? How are their relationships with parents, siblings, etc.?

Who is the dominant authority figure in the family and how much power do they have?

What family traditions are important and how are they passed on?

What gender issues exist in the culture or family? What does that mean for females, especially?

How/when are marriage partners chosen and what impact does that have on youth?

3.3 Questions concerning Youth Contexts

What level of media saturation are they exposed to? This includes movies, television, music, magazines, internet, etc.

How social are they? How much time do they spend with peers and what type of peers are they? What is the degree of peer influence?

How much are they influenced by popular culture, especially in fashion, attitudes, possessions, and activities?

What recreational activities do they participate in?

What is their exposure to and interest in music and other arts?

3.4 Questions concerning Religious Contexts

What is the spiritual environment? What is the religious influence of parents and other significant adults, both Christian and non-Christian?

What is the Christian environment of the culture? What is the level of perceived and actual understanding of Christianity? How friendly or opposed is the environment to Christianity?

What are the primary non-Christian religious influences? What types of religious persecution exists in the culture?

4. Global Needs of Young People

In looking at the felt and evident needs of young people by region throughout the world, we can conclude that there are certain needs that are universal under the following broad categories: emotional, physical, social, intellectual and spiritual.

If local churches are going to help transform the lives of young people, they must find ways of addressing these needs. To aid this process, after each need described there is a number of strategic questions which local churches should ask themselves as they develop their own action plans.

4.1 Emotional Needs

The Need for Identity (significance, acceptance, security)

Young people all over the world are desperately trying to find out who they are and what it means to be human. This search for identity includes the need to be accepted as they are, and to feel that they have a significant contribution to make.

This search for identity and significance is exacerbated by a social pressure, dislocation, economic need, deprivation and other global factors. Young people are lacking security because of uncertainties concerning the future, political and socio-economic developments.

The Need for Power

A further part of their search is the legitimate desire to have a share in real power. This includes power to shape their own personal destiny and their environment. Some also desire to have an influence and transform the realities of this world, in areas like politics, ecology and social structures.

The Need for Unconditional love

Young people desire to be accepted as they are, without having to perform or meet certain expectations. This desire for unconditional love is often thwarted by demands placed on them by the realities of tradition, education, relationships and economics.

The Need to be heard and valued

Young people have the legitimate desire to be taken seriously in their views and aspirations, to be heard, given a voice and be valued for who they are and what they stand for. They do not want to be regarded merely as potential for the future, but rather as valid contributors in the present.

Strategic Questions concerning Emotional Needs

Does the church consider youth as an important part of their ministry? Does the church intentionally reach out to, plan for and include youth as an integral part of their ministry and community?

Does the church place confidence in their abilities and give them the space and power to utilize their potential?

Does the church show unconditional love by accepting youth and their culture as a valuable part of the life of the church? Does the church express this love in real and practical ways?

Are youth valued for their present contributions or seen as a secondary group whose time has not yet come?

Does the church allow young people to freely express their feelings and emotions, both their joys and struggles as well as their thoughts, ideas and gifts?

Does the church encourage and support young people in their struggle for life, education, search for vocation and other areas?

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> "Youth culture also creates hierarchies. It is not about equality, it is about the leader type student or students that defines the culture - this generates the powerful and powerless – with concomitant massive short and long-term problems."

4.2 Physical Needs

The basic needs (food, safety, shelter, medical care, a healthy environment etc.) are the same for all people. Young people are often powerless in achieving and/or securing them for themselves. Basic needs also include education and employment.

Strategic Questions concerning Physical Needs

What are the specific physical needs of youth in my area? Is the church addressing these needs? If not, how can we address them?

What resources can we provide to meet physical needs of youth?

Are there any other organisations which are more able to meet the needs of youth than we are? How can we cooperate with them?

How can we learn from others that are already addressing the physical needs of youth? What can the church do to help youth mature physically?

4.3 Social Needs

Young people need healthy and stable relationships in which they can thrive. They need to feel and know that they belong. This includes functioning families, peer groups, social clubs and other relational networks. They need to belong to an interdependent community that will help them to develop socially and intellectually. In their personal development they need to be supported by friends, mentors and role models, and at the same time be free and encouraged to make independent explorations into life.

Strategic Questions concerning Social Needs

Is there a communication gap between church leadership and youth?

What is the church doing to help develop healthy family relationships?

Do adult Christians realize that they impact young Christians both positively and negatively in the way they relate to them or not relate to them?

How can the church provide a healthy environment in which youth can meet with their peers?

Does the church listen to, learn from and integrate young people in all aspects of church life?

Is the church encouraging, equipping and supporting youth in forming relationships of integrity with peers outside the faith for the purpose of evangelism?

4.4 Intellectual Needs

Educational Needs

Young people need to be educated in order to secure better employment and other options for the future. It is frustrating for young people when parents and societal institutions do not recognize the importance of long-term investment in education. In addition, there are regions of the world where education is not possible for all kinds of reasons.

Strategic Questions concerning Educational Needs

How can local churches assist young people to access education opportunities? Could churches fund education, provide education, raise awareness of parents?

In those places where education is not possible, the church has a role to affirm youth in whatever employment they can secure of whatever contribution they can make to society. How can young people that are educationally underprivileged still find a sense of value and meaning?

Needs concerning Life Skills

Young people need to be able to deal with the realities of life. They require skills to make important life decisions such as: career options; choosing a marriage partner; managing finances, the place where they live etc. In some cases life preserving skills are required, such as, surviving war, famine and ethnic conflict.

Strategic Questions concerning Life Skills

When should youth begin to think about choosing a life partner? How can the church facilitate choosing and developing a career? Would this be done best by involving adult members of the church in one on one counselling or by offering a group training course – or both?

How can the church help to prepare young people for surviving disasters like war and famine?

What about young people in other countries – how can they express Christian concern for those affected by disaster?

4.5 Spiritual Needs

The Need for Purpose

Young people are searching for meaning and purpose. In many instances, this search leads them to explore alternative spiritualities and the occult, rather than to the church, which often does not seem to provide viable answers, deep spiritual experience and power. In addition, there often is a disparity between the claims and message of Christians and their behaviour.

Young people are also looking for direction and want to develop authentic and liveable moral values.

The Need for Connection, Hope and Power

Young people want to experience a transcendental reality which has the potential to infuse their lives with hope and power. They want to feel connected to something that is bigger than themselves and the realities in the world around them, which they perceive as fleeting and limiting, and sometimes outright oppressive.

Strategic Questions concerning Spiritual Needs

Is the local church providing opportunities for young people to experience and witness authentic Christianity through the lives of leaders, adults and peers?

Is the church clearly and relevantly communicating the gospel to young people and giving them an opportunity to respond?

Can the church respond to questions asked by young people about alternative spiritualities?

Teens told me that they "used to be Christians, but now they were Wiccans." All three went on to say that at church they couldn't find anyone who could tell them why they believed or what they believed. Plus, everyone they knew was living a powerless life. Kids today are looking for substance, something that is genuine and something that really works. We must get back to the basics of our faith or we will see this generation go back to the jungle.

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5. Needs of Young People in Regions of the World

As we apply the questions to various parts of the world, we recognize both world-wide trends as well as regional particularities as regards the needs of young people and the special challenges for the ministry of the church to them.

5.1 Africa

In Africa, there is a generation gap between youth and older people. For young people, it is hard to break the cultural barriers. There tends to be high identification with institutions like schools, symbols, clothes politics etc. So belonging to different groups to identify is very important. Why do young people want to belong to a certain group?

Important is the background: ethnic groups, tribes, family etc. These natural groups or movements are very important. Young people tend to go to a school, church, or group where the leader is from their tribe or at least the same ethnic group. When you don't belong to a group, you feel alone, there is no sense of security. Dress codes are very important for the identification in a group.

Youth want to be known as a group member (e.g. Islam, Churches etc.) They are proud of their background. There are emerging cult movements with strong rituals or even occult practices or witchcraft, different "gangs" which are into violence, drugs etc. There are spiritual and social battles between the different "cults", because young people need something to believe in.

Perceived Needs of Youth in Africa

We must understand the background where the young people including the Christians, are coming from. There is high materialism in the youth, unemployment, bad attitudes, bad role models from the church pastors, selfishness and immorality amongst Christians. Some basic necessities are: Basic teaching in Bible, social life, discipleship, training programs for the youth, role models and integration into the church. There is a need for mentoring, but there is a generation gap, so this is very difficult. Also, there is a lack of resources like Bibles, teaching materials, Christian education resources and such like.

There is a great need for Christian and social education. Another problem is the challenge of having to face Islam. There are problems in family life, as family structures are broken, last but not least the spread of AIDS.

Forming groups within the churches is very important – as a place where young people can connect and feel at home. Choirs are one important context in which young people can acquire an acceptable identity. Although in some churches this works well, overall a stronger emphasis should be laid on small groups for young people.

The church already tries to help to care for young people, but there are many neglected areas, such as education in sexuality, marriage, family business and AIDS, which all ties in with the lack of role models.

The church in Africa is only marginally meeting the needs of youth. Youth ministry normally consists of a choir group that meets once or twice weekly to practice songs for Sunday morning services. This gives the youth some sense of identity and teaching, but it is insufficient. A program to reach youth outside of the church is seriously lacking and existing programs are often not culturally relevant to the youth culture and so the church is losing youth.

Jealousy and fear of losing one's position often keep existing church leadership from giving opportunity to the youth to serve in the church and they are consequently neglected.

> "Young people seek autonomy from their parents and from each other, yet they want the affirmation of their parents and peers. They are anxious about the future but do not want to show it."

Proposed Strategies for Reaching Youth in Africa

African youth need a sense of identity and belonging in the church. Due to the lack of emphasis given to youth, they often identify with other groups in their cultures such as educational institutions, sports teams or in some cases, such as Nigeria, occult groups.

The church can help strengthen youth's identity with the church in three key ways.

(a) Rite of passage

Many African cultures include a "rite of passage", when youth come of age. The individual passes from childhood to adulthood in a ceremony or after a series of tests or events. The church, which is loosing youth between the time when they are dedicated and when they become adults, can make use of this system. Youth can be required to pass through a series of tests or events, such as a spiritual retreat, after which they will be recognized by all as a member of the youth of the church. This adds significance to belonging to the church and gives the youth a needed identity.

(b) Expression

Allow youth to express themselves in healthy ways. Youth have lots of energy and need to express themselves and their ideas. Allowing young people to use that energy within the church keeps them in the church. A church in Nigeria allowed the youth to perform a concert in the music style that they preferred. Although their modern style made some of the church leaders uncomfortable, they were allowed to continue. As a result, youth from outside the church began to come in to hear their friends perform and to participate.

(c) Service

Give opportunity for youth to serve in the church. Youth better identify with the church when they are given responsibility and opportunity to serve. Youth can serve in many ways including; evangelism, intercessory prayer groups and AIDS projects.

Youth programs in Africa need strengthening. When a program only consists of choir practice and singing on Sunday morning, many needs go unmet. Including activities such as sports, music bands and service projects will help keep the youth. Teaching is often neglected in youth programs and so teaching on specific topics is needed such as: marriage, sex, AIDS, alcohol, drugs, dealing with the disabled and charismatic issues.

Informal mentoring would also help strengthen youth programs. African youth learn through relationships and discussions. The emerging youth culture, especially in urban areas, does not always relate well to parents who grew up in a different environment. Informal mentoring relationships would allow a secure place for youth to discuss their problems and get practical advice.

African youth have many social needs. Poverty and AIDS affect the youth dramatically. The church can help by providing youth with skills to survive in the world such as training in business and skills training. Clear AIDS policies and teaching on AIDS prevention will help the young make good decisions. Prevention activities such as singing about AIDS and its dangers or drama about AIDS can help prevent the spread of the disease. Youth can be involved in caring for those suffering from AIDS and discussing AIDS is a means of opening doors for evangelism.

A personal testimony: Maketa

As a youth, I was given the opportunity to serve in my church. Many of the youth served on the intercessory prayer committee and the deliverance committee. I was on the deliverance committee and found a sense of self-worth and identity in the group. I was proud to serve in the church and was in church each Sunday so I could help with praying for people at the end of the service .

When I became a pastor, a problem developed with the leader of the youth band. Whenever anyone wanted to borrow an instrument from the church, they would come directly

to me and ask to borrow it and I would give permission.   This caused a conflict with the leader because he wanted people to come to him. I decided to give him the responsibility for the instruments and I made an announcement saying that anyone wanting to borrow instruments should talk to him. He has taken the responsibility very seriously and has done a good job. He is now more faithful in coming to church and is proud to serve in this role.

A Case Study from Cameroon

Edith was born in a traditional Catholic family. She grew up with a religious education and had parents with strict moral rules, but she had never met Jesus Christ in a personal way. Once she reached university, Edith discovered a new lifestyle free of her parent's strict rules. She began living carelessly and indulging in a more immoral lifestyle than ever before. Yet all of her newfound liberty led only to despair. She soon discovered that her rebellion could not give her the peace she craved. So when she heard about Jesus Christ, she eagerly received him into her life! With training she received from Campus Crusade, she not only became more assured of her salvation, but also learned how to share Christ with others. The first person to receive Christ through Edith was her former boyfriend, who later also joined Campus Crusade. A few months after this, Edith was posted in the southwest of Cameroon, to study to become a mathematics teacher. One infamous male student showed romantic interest in her and he approached her to propose that they engage in a sexual affair. Rather than respond to his proposition with anger, Edith shared Jesus Christ with him! This young man renowned for his immorality, became a believer, totally changed his lifestyle and started sharing Christ with others! A few weeks later that young man's best friend – astounded by the change he had seen in his friend - came to Edith and pleaded with her, "I don't know what you taught him, but please teach me the same thing!" He also received Christ. Edith is still impacting the lives of teachers and students in that school today!

A Perspective from the Central African Republic (CAR*)*

In Central Africa there is a specific youth culture which manifests itself in many ways. There is a new kind of fashion. Young girls in high school dress more scantily than before. The boys like to wear trousers which are different to what older men wear. Young people have a great interest in almost any music which is different from local music. They love everything and anything coming from Europe, USA, or another part of the world, things that are different from home. Yet only 25 percent of young people attend school.

On the other hand, there is the traditional culture with ancestral beliefs. Modern music, dance, fashion, hairstyle and language are all in contrast to that culture. The ancestral beliefs are communicated by the older generation through the family network. Ninety percent of young people live under the influence of this traditional culture. Ancestral culture involves the inner dimension like believing in ancestral, false gods. Therefore, some young people live with an inner fear because they have fallen into some disobedient behaviour.

In our CAR context there is a permanent economic and social crisis. The main questions are about money, wearing good clothes and eating sufficiently. Because these essential needs cannot be met, many youth abandon school and adopt a pattern of bad behaviour. Some leave their parental home to live with some friends who have the same lifestyle. One of the causes for the problems is the dislocation of the family. In the context of crises, the parents are unable to meet the essential needs of their youth. When a family member is sick, the question remains how to get the needed medicine. Everybody's hope is to overcome poverty and have a livelihood.

As part of their culture, young people have a specific language and behaviour which expresses there needs and desires. They put great value on beauty, pleasure and amusement. They also want to be valued and respected in society. Young people want to live their life to the full and to stay young for a long time. Often they don't think about the reality of life and take things too lightly. The questions they have are related to their personal identity. Their first sexual experience tends to be early, when they are 14 or 15 years old, the consequence of which is that most who contract AIDS are young.

Most young people are disappointed and feel rejected in society. They feel that there is no place for them, that life has no meaning and everything is bad. They are afraid of having no job in the future.

In the church there are some activities for youth like holiday camps, retreats, rallies with some teaching. However, not all the problems of youth are addressed, such as sexuality and poverty. The church must work hard to make specific programs to share the gospel with young people and help those in the church to be models. We must reconsider the way in which we try to reach young people. We have to look at the needs and hopes and examine the context in which they live and then contextually formulate the gospel message for young people. Other fields of study like anthropology or sociology can help in this.

It is very possible for the church to take care of its youth if the pastor has a clear vision for youth ministry. Church leaders need to identify the needs of their young people and find ways to meet these needs. Youth constitute a missionary target for the local church. Youth are the future leaders of the church. Therefore, the pastor needs to have a program to train those who could assist the youth in the local church. The church must identify the problems which block young people developing their faith and address these issues. We should express to the youth our love from God, help them to resolve their problems and encourage the parents to build a good relationship with them.

A Perspective from Cameroon

One can discern a specific youth culture in the Cameroons, especially in the capital, Yaounde. Young people here are interested in the type of items acclaimed in developed countries which are like a model to them. They listen and dance to HipHop, R & B, discuss the pop stars they watch on cable TV or wear the last denim jeans because that is seen as being "in". However, they are African. When a girl wants to feel free in her attire, she can put on a pair of jeans, but she can also try a "Kaba", a type of ample dress sewn in a cotton fabric. The guy without a cell phone will appear a little bit odd, and the smaller the phone the better. I think these young people are just as lost as any other and just as full of hope. Compared to adults they are sometimes careless. Just as adults, they know that much is at stake in the years to come and they will soon have to fend for themselves.

There are different subcultures. We are working with youth from the whole of Cameroon gathered here in Yaoundé and they bring a completely different understanding of what it means to be twenty and at university. For instance, I am relating to and sharing the gospel with a girl who is about 21 and is studying third year medicine. She dresses in the modest way of a girl from a Muslim family in the northern provinces, but she is happy to receive me in her room to discuss the Bible. Other students from the Islamic group would just look at me with contempt.

Apart from regional differences, there is the social aspect. Young people from families with modest incomes cannot afford certain luxuries. Instruments like the internet have become common for most youth. Some girls will only log on for specific purposes like marriage, while many really consider it as a tool to secure a better level of education. These young people are eager to experience life to the full. They are impatient and full of ambitions. They question their parents' lifestyle, asking themselves poignant questions. They want to get the best from Western culture, but they also want to hold on to the special features they enjoy in their own culture. One good example of this is the warmth and support one receives when there is a bereavement in the family and people come to you and are ready to go with you to your home village when you have to bury a family member there.

These young people wonder why they don't have better models in their lives, why the church sounds so hollow when they expect much from it, why their dad and mum divorced, why they have to work so hard in school and end up jobless. Sometimes, there are outbursts of rebellion against all form of authorities, some have ceased asking questions and are ready to be involved in church committees and still ask their girlfriend to commit abortion. They can be church elders and still be involved in bribery, they can wear a traditional dress and surf on the internet all night long.

The generation gap is getting bigger for youth between their studies and parties. They also have many more opportunities than their father or mother had. Yet, a student with

a BA has less chance of finding a good job today than his father had twenty years ago with just a General Certificate of Education.

When I joined my new church, I proposed an all night of prayer and with the pastor's approval, sixty young people attended that wonderful time. As I shared about leaving the life of immorality drawing from Daniel's life and Isaiah 1, many were touched. During the break, one young girl came to me. She wanted us to pray for people like her who had gone way too far. Young people are eager to experience revival, they need help and lots of prayers.

There are many trends. Some evangelical churches have programs that work. However, in most cases, youths are only told to come to church, to get baptized and to be discrete in their relationships with the opposite sex. Even when purity is preached, only discretion is expected. In the same light, many needs are not well assessed or addressed.

There are youth groups in most churches in Cameroon. The problem is that some of the youth groups function as little cells to help manage the church, but most are not specialized in ministry with and towards youth. As a member of Campus Crusade, I am always surprised to discover how many young people are unaware of basics in prayer, salvation and pure relationships.

5.2 America – North
Perceived Needs in North America
While not offering an exhaustive survey of the current needs of young people in North America, we perceive particular needs in the following areas: training to discern media messages, selection of vocation, development of moral values and management of social problems.

(a) Discerning media messages
Young people need help to understand and discern the manipulative messages which are fed to them by the media regarding their identity and the values they should embrace. Typical North American church youth ministries do not normally address these issues. They teach from the Bible, but these teachings are often only theoretical and do not touch kids on the street-level. They are not culturally relevant. The consequence of this is that young people compartmentalize spirituality and they have no help in judging what is true or false, harmful or helpful in the prevailing secular culture.

(b) Selection of vocation
Young people need a sense of destiny and vocation in Jesus. Further, they need help and mentoring as they select their vocations. Furthermore, youth need to be taught to integrate the spiritual and eternal into the everyday life and work of the vocation they choose. They need a vision for serving God through any and all occupations, not only through traditional ministry jobs.

(c) Development of moral values
Young people need help to develop and define their moral values. Today, North American young people are taught by the media that morals are not black-and-white. The media also conveys that some actions which used to be wrong are now okay – if you can get away with them (i.e. scandals of public figures). Tolerance also muddies the water, especially in Canada. Advocates of tolerance propose that all things should be judged only by the so-called "law of love". Yet the "warm and fuzzy" kind of love that is meant here is not the true love that the Bible teaches, which includes discipline and guidelines for life. Young people need to be taught to interpret Biblical moral values through the lens of a Biblical worldview.

Social problems
Social problems abound in North American society and young people are often those who are harmed the most. They need help to confront and overcome these problems. Some examples include:

(i) Because of the internet, pornography is more accessible to young people than ever before. Hardly any effort is required to get hold of pornography and its graphic nature has been heightened.

(ii) Homosexuality as a social norm has led to a number of young people choosing this lifestyle while going through the sexual confusion which is a normal phase of puberty.

(iii) Sex education is limited and often un-Biblical. Often, discussion about sex is taboo in church. Thus, the only sex education that many youth get is from school or media and these messages do not normally promote abstinence.

(iv) There are many other problems like drugs, anorexia and other self-destructive behaviour which need to be addressed in the secure context of church life where biblical principles are the basis for discussion and where young people and their friends together are encouraged to choose their values and to cherish these values.

Proposed Strategies

(a) Discerning media messages

Youth workers must become more educated and aware of the specific media influences which affect their young people and how young people are processing those influences. Youth ministries should provide youth with tools to discern the messages they receive from popular culture and media. Youth workers need to talk to kids about what they are watching and listening to and help them think critically about the real results and consequences of the behaviour and lifestyle which the media promotes. Finally, youth workers should develop programs that interface with pop culture and media, and use current songs, video clips, etc. as teaching tools.

(b) Selection of vocation

Youth workers need to cast a broader vision of the Kingdom of God and vocational calling. They should challenge youth to view all vocations – from engineering to nursing to teaching to business to ministry – through the lens of the Kingdom. Counsel youth directly as they seek their purpose in life and expose them to professionals of all kinds who seek to serve God in their job.

(c) Development of moral values

Simply telling young people "the rules" is not enough. Youth will not be able to live according to rules unless these are taught in a context of a trusting relationship. Relationship is fundamental to instilling values. Moral values should be taught in the context of a youth's relationship with God. A young person is much more likely to live according to the moral values and guidelines of the Bible if (s)he understands that these guidelines emerge from God's deep love for her/him. Moral values are also connected to a youth's relationship to the authority figures in the church like elders, the pastor and the youth minister. When young people feel loved and valued by them, they are more likely to live according to Biblical values, because they will not want to disappoint them and they will trust that these rules are not simply arbitrary or authoritarian, but are guidelines that emerge from love and concern for their own good.

(d) Social Problems

The foundational strategy for helping youth as they struggle with problems like pornography, sex, anorexia, etc., is to create an environment of unconditional love in your youth ministry. Youth must know that you will love them no matter what and that it is safe for them to share honestly about their struggles. The church must put an end to the taboo that often surrounds these topics. We must be willing to talk about these issues openly and to ask God to transform and heal us and our youth. We also need to educate our youth more thoroughly about these issues and to connect those who struggle with these problems with professional counselling in a caring, discreet and confidential manner.

(e) The gap

Currently, churches in mainline denominations are often responding rather poorly to the needs of the youth generation. The majority of churches do not have a youth ministry budget or a dedicated youth ministry staff person. Even fewer churches have viable ministries to college-aged young people and young adults in their twenties. A fundamental flaw in most church youth ministry is the lack of value placed on outreach. Even churches that do have youth ministry programs are not usually engaged in significant outreach to unsaved youth. Youth ministries are often dedicated to maintenance rather than to mission.

Training is also a serious deficit in North American youth ministry, although youth ministry training resources are highly accessible. This is a product of an attitude that fails to take youth ministry seriously. Yet ministry to youth is not just "baby-sitting" or a stepping-stone to real ministry to adults. Awareness of the strategic and important nature of ministry to youth must increase. Churches must begin to provide serious training, leadership and resources to their youth programs.

Finally, the church must begin to see youth not only as recipients of ministry, but also as *agents* of ministry. Jesus did not commission us to make converts, but disciples. Thus, our goal is not just to evangelize youth, but also to equip them and send them out as "indigenous" evangelists to their peers.

The existence of a global youth culture means that youth across the world share a common base of knowledge of music and media, clothes and other artefacts, values, ideas, behaviour and even elements of language. So Christian youth are well equipped as indigenous evangelists to unreached youth. The most strategic thing the church can do to reach the youth generation is to equip those who already believe as youth-evangelists who can start a chain-reaction of evangelism among their peers!

In some cases, this will even mean supporting youth as they plant new kinds of churches that better fit their post-modern sensibilities. Young people are the emerging church and in more and more instances, they fail to fit into traditional church structures. The Body of Christ in North America must support young people as they plant and develop churches that better contextualize the gospel for their and future generations. We must hold the *form* of church loosely, allowing adaptation in that form so that the emerging church may more effectively complete its *function*.

A view from the United States

In many ways youth culture was "born" in the USA. That is not to say that other societies and eras did not have distinctive youth cultures, but certainly the way youth culture has developed in recent history has been driven in a large part by American culture. Because youth culture changes so rapidly in the USA, some say every three years, it is difficult to describe the cultural marks of fashion, music and language. Regarding lifestyle, though, I believe one can identify that American youth are typically marked by consumerism. While much of American culture is market-driven, youth seem particularly to exploit and be exploited by consumer trends. Cliques are often marked by the brand name of clothes they wear, by the products they purchase and by the entertainment they can afford. Many American youth seem to be rewriting Descartes' famous statement, changing it from "I think, therefore I am" to "I consume, therefore I am."

Youth culture in the USA is not a monolithic block. There is great diversity in youth culture, primarily seen in ethnicity and economic disparity. In many cases, if not most, ethnicity and economic level are stronger indicators of cultural identity than age groupings. So, a Black youth's experience will differ from a Hispanic youth's experience and both will differ from a White youth's experience. Unfortunately, much literature and research in the American Christian publishing world has overlooked these differences.

> "American teens place huge value on belonging to a particular "tribe." This is their circle of closest friends – almost like a 'substitute family.' According to George Barna there are at least 20 different subcultures that exist in the United States today. Many teens belong to more than one subculture. There are: Boarders, Goths, Skinheads, Gays, Greenies, Geeks, Jocks, Rappers, Metalheads, Preps, Gearheads, Jesus freaks and many others."

Thinking and experiencing life in the dominant American youth culture is much like a "hurry-up-and-wait" game. Many adolescents, because of social and economic factors, take on adult responsibilities. There is a separation between youth and adult culture that most adults do not recognize. Youth develop a parallel universe that adults never see. In this universe they deal with relational, economic and social joys and traumas, apart from a proactive adult network and without the psychosocial maturity of an adult. Growing up as an ethnic minority youth in the USA can often be like seeing a mirage of an oasis in the desert.

You see this beautiful spring of fresh water, only to arrive and discover sand running through your fingers. You live in a land of freedom, but you still experience systemic oppression. The negative result is anger, disillusionment and resentment. These thoughts and feelings, by and large, are not as evident in the dominant white culture. On the positive side, though, many minority youths have a greater appreciation for their cultural heritage.

I see the inner dimension of American youth culture guided by three "searches." *First* is the search for community. As traditional familial roles have broken down in American culture, the current landscape across the culture tends to be fractured. Support networks that once buffered life are not necessarily there for many youth. Many fall through the cracks. So, youth search for the family they never had or the family they wish they had. They often find family in a small cluster of trusted friends.

Second is the search for a viable role in society. There is no demarcation line in American culture that clearly indicates when one has achieved adulthood. One can get a driver's license at 16, graduate high school at 18 and graduate university at 22 and still not be considered an adult by much of society. Some current researchers now indicate that adolescence in the USA lasts until a person is about 25.

Third is a search for meaningful spirituality. Though many may consider the USA a Christian nation, the spiritual search for American youth tends to be secular and post-modern. It is secular because it is likely to occur apart from the institution of the Christian church. It is post-modern because it is influenced by a consciousness that recognizes the futility of the modern ethos steeped in rationalism. The result is a generation of spiritual pilgrims who seem content to wander from religion to religion, seeking and finding spiritual truth from contradictory sources. Post-modern American youth search for spiritual truth, but it is a truth they construct for themselves to fit their own local world.

Concerning the questions young people have, there are the questions one would expect related to future goals. Beyond that, I think the most significant question American youth have is: Who are my friends? Perhaps a better way to say it is in a series of three questions: Who do I know? Who knows me? How can I be known? As American youth develop their world separate from adults, with its own social structure, language and values, the only people they see that really know them is their friends. Loyalty to friends as a common value is paramount among American youth. A youth's identity is tied up in who he/she chooses to know and who he/she chooses to be known by.

American youth are more ethnically diverse than previous generations. Soon whites will no longer be the majority, but will be part of a plurality among Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and people of other backgrounds. I don't think the Christian church, particularly the evangelical wing, recognizes this opportunity nor is the church adapting to this reality. More and more youth take ethnic diversity for granted and they expect society's institutions to support it. For many it is a non-issue and will be surprised and disappointed, for example, if the church remains segregated.

> "In the USA most kids feel pressure to succeed. That creates a strong fear of failure. Recent studies have shown that teen suicide is on the rise and is now the third leading cause of death for Americans 13-19. A lot of that can be attributed to perceived pressure to succeed."

Today's youth are more technologically savvy than previous generations. To state this is almost a cliché, but the reality is evident and significant. Computer technology has changed the way youth think and communicate. On the political horizon, today's world order is different than previous generations. When I was a youth in the 1970s, nations aligned with one of the two superpowers, USA or USSR. Since the restructuring of Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the Gulf War in the early 1990s, the alignment is more between traditionally Christian nations and traditionally Islamic nations. It is understandable that many do not want to state it that way, but the perception is clear. Of course, this has a tremendous impact on how we formulate and practice evangelisation as Christians.

Because of the value cluster that American culture upholds, particularly the heightened sense of individualism, Americans tend to be relationally poor. What many observers of American society have noticed as the great need of Americans in general is "the

need for authentic community." American youth today feel more critically. Therefore, when relationships do go wrong in a youth's life, they tend to feel the pain more acutely.

> "Because of the gender discussion, there is a great insecurity regarding one's own identity as a man or woman."

The greatest wounds, hurts and traumas come at the place where American youth are most vulnerable, in their relationships. Circumstances like the breaking up of a family through divorce, the death of a loved one, the end of a love affair and moving away from friends cause widespread emotional pain. On a personal level, not surprisingly, the greatest insecurities come in the area of the greatest hurts, namely in relationships. So, not having loyal friends and being alone contribute to great emotional fear. There is self-protection and safety found in clustering with a few trusted friends. Apart from one's cluster one feels vulnerable.

On a societal level, there is an imminent fear springing from the trauma of the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York September 11, 2001. The USA's psyche, as a whole, was damaged and the feeling of invulnerability was stripped away. Since then the threat of physical harm by some unknown terrorist lurks in the backs of many American's minds and can dampen the freedom and spontaneity that American youth want to enjoy.

Most youth in the USA would express a desire for economic viability and emotional stability, but when one takes the time to talk to a youth, one finds the sincerest hope is to be known. Youth want to be known for who they are, the good and the bad, and still be accepted and loved. Typically, the church runs behind the culture in responding to trends. That has meant historically in the USA that parachurch organizations often rose up to meet the needs of youth. The church later adapted parachurch methods, but usually without the evangelistic thrust. Of course, parachurch organizations also become ineffective when they fail to adapt or change with times. In a word, they become an institution. Institutions, by their nature, do not respond well to change. Where I see the church responding effectively to the youth generation is among recently planted churches. These new churches have the desire and the flexibility to respond to cultural changes.

Despite my critique of the church above, there are many positive things the church as a whole is doing in terms of specialized outreach to youth. Most medium and large (and many small) churches of all denominations have a youth minister on staff to direct the youth ministry. Within a great variety, one can observe some general trends. Most church youth ministries have a youth group meeting, with culturally appropriate music, games, and message.

For those interested in a deeper commitment, small group Bible studies and discipleship programs are usually featured. Many youth ministries also are involved in different kinds of mission work. This is a very general description, but one trend is worth noting. In the 1970s and 1980s the emphasis was on large group events. These were high-energy affairs with dynamic music and speakers geared for reaching a large audience. Beginning in the 1990s, there has been a noticeable shift in youth ministry to personal relationships. Events and venues tend to be on a smaller scale, like coffee houses. The smaller, more intimate, venues allow for conversation, feedback and a more relaxed atmosphere. In this context worship and relationships are the emphasis. Youth currently prefer high-touch over high-energy.

5.3 America - South
A Perspective from Latin America
Youth ministry is defining for the present and future of the church in Latin America. The continent is witnessing the emergence of the biggest youth generation in the history of these lands. The United Nations suspects that in the next ten years, 75% of the population of Latin America will be less than 25 years old. It is known around the world that this is a very special time for the church in Latin America. From an importing church we changed to an exporting one. From a church used to the customs and modes of missionaries we switched to a church for export, a local church more immersed in the Latin culture and more

relevant to the customs and world views of the people of the continent and a missionary movement that is affecting other areas of the world (especially Spain, the Muslim World and the United States). In the midst of this *kairos*, youth ministry becomes even more significant and crucial to the evolution of the church

Four big challenges for the Church in Latin America

(a) Provide Training

The church in Latin America is in desperate need of effective and relational youth ministry training. Many churches still view youth ministry as a stepping stone towards "serious" ministry or as glorified baby-sitting. "Youth minister" usually only means "youth preacher," so that those who work with youth only preach at them and do not form significant relationships with them. There is no formal training in youth ministry in almost any important seminary in the continent except for a few courses here and there that approaches the youth problems and the challenges of you ministry. Most youth church programs are outdated. Ninety percent of the youth events are as any adult service any Sunday morning with the only difference that the ones leading them are younger. There are still thousands of churches which still do not have youth pastors or youth leaders that stay in the job for more than one year. This is due to the system (put up by the missionaries a century ago) in which the youth vote one of them to lead the activities for the year ahead and then they switch again next year throwing out any progress that the past leadership has done in gaining the trust of the group.

(b) Release Resources

There has been a lack of specialized materials that are relevant and update to work with teenagers today. Some organizations like Especialidades Juveniles, Liderazgo Juvenil and Para Líderes have been quickly growing these last years but the big majority of churches in the continent are still lacking and professional resource to develop a mature and attractive ministry among their youth.

(c) Understand Consumer society

As in the rest of the American continent, young people in Latin America are influenced by the media and by consumer's society. The biggest challenge tough in this context is that kids in this part of the world cannot get what they see on TV or the internet. This creates self esteem problem that many times unleash violence outbursts and a hopelessness mentality.

(d) Overcome Lack of Understanding

A lack of understanding of the holistic mission of the church: Most youth workers in Latin America believe that their task is just teaching the Bible and keeping their kids out of sin: they don't see a connection between what they do and the kids needs to became healthy and mature adults in all areas of human growth. In practical patterns this produces programs which do not relate with the basic needs and realities of the youth and hence are not relevant for their communities.

5.4 Asia

Perceived Needs of Young People in Asia

These are some of the perceived needs of young people in Asia: Healthier family relationships, ability to handle stress, unrealistic expectations and opposition from family and society, time to think, relax and have fun. There is a need to experience healthy love, intimacy and ability to express love, acceptance for who they are, not what they do, so that they can have a healthy self-esteem. There is a need for space – physical and abstract, they need to be accepted, listened to, understood and developed. In the in least developed regions of Asia, there is a need for educational scholarships, for training and motivation in basic life skills and the ability to function in society.

Proposed Strategies for Local Churches in Asia

The Church must develop strategies to address the following areas: Life purpose, life journey, lifestyle, life ministry.

Churches should try to develop youth centres for various activities. These would include: music lessons, sports, games, places to relax and do school work, light meals and workshops.

The church should seek to help youth transition into young adults by focussing on life issues like inter-personal skills, finances, marriage, partners and careers. A way to do this is to create cell groups for guidance, training leaders and modelling how to live the Christian life. Encourage mature Christians to live with young Christians to help them grow in their relationship with Jesus and how to live in a secular society.

At least once per year the church should have a 'Youth Sunday', where young people do the entire service. At different times throughout the year the church should allow the opportunity to express their opinions, concerns and desires for ministry. This could be done through panels and surveys.

A Perspective from Malaysia

In Malaysia there are clashes of many cultures. Youth are very open to many new things.

Young men like to have their hair long and listen to alternative music. Nowadays youth are looking for short cuts to do things. Their motto is to enjoy life to the fullest. Perseverance is something very old fashioned for them. For example, they can't imagine why a couple should continue to bear with one another if they are not "in love" anymore. So, the lyrics of the songs reflect this kind of "temporary philosophy". Many young people are influenced by a materialistic value system. There is a variety of expression of youth culture. One of the distinguishing marks is the way they talk, using a lot of newly created words.

Friends play a very important role in a young person being attracted to a certain subculture. If their peer group are in a particular subculture, then most probably they are more open to doing whatever the others in that subculture do. For instance, many female college students smoke and think this is something very fashionable.

In Malaysia, many parents and adults find the youth are more individualistic. The youth admit this. The world changes too fast, they are very uncertain of their future, so they prefer to live in the present, rather than having a long term planning. One of the inner dimensions of the youth culture is indifference. Most young people don't care about things that are happening around them. For example, they did not see the spread of the disease SARS in Asia as "their business". The main questions concerning life and meaning that young people have are: "How can I enjoy life?" "How can I earn as much money as possible before I turn 40?" "Why am I here on earth?" "Is there meaning to life?"

They try to manage by studying hard in order to get good degree. At the same time, they get involved in "direct selling" in order to earn extra money. Some of them lead a very casual lifestyle, can have one night stand to enjoy life since there are many uncertainties. The wide use of internet and mobile phone sets young people's experience apart from that of their parent's generation. Most young people spend hours in front of computer to communicate with their friends. They prefer using images. They SMS to share their feelings with friends. They are raised in a small nuclear family, with only one or two siblings, so they cannot imagine why they need to "share " resources with others.

Family breakdown is one of the greatest traumas for young people. More and more youth are from divorced families. This caused them to be very suspicious towards the adults. They feel they become a burden to their parents. Insecurities and fears are that they cannot find a good job and might not get recognition in the society. Their hopes and dreams are to be very successful in career and they hope for peace in the world.

Some churches are trying to answer the questions of young people. The youth pastors in these churches try to identify with young people by creating a more open atmosphere in church, singing lively songs, preaching practical messages. However, many churches are still very slow in responding to their thinking. Sometimes they are judgemental to young people because of their non-conservative lifestyle.

Campus Crusade's campus ministry is focussed to reach out to college students. Malaysia is a very special piece of land. The ethnic heritage of our population comes from China, India, Indonesia and the Arabian Peninsula. So we know there are many obstacles for non-Christian youth to become involved in the Christian community. We organize many

talks that are relevant to their life, such as, Boy/Girl relationships, time management, what is true success? We organize outings to the beaches and mountains so that they can enjoy the creation of our loving Heavenly Father. We hope through these encounters, many "stones" of their hearts can be removed. In short, relationships matter.

We need to care for the youth. God will use the youth to be the light in this distorted world. So what we need to do is to faithfully and creatively do our part as mentors and disciplers. We must be very open to young people and should not judge before we really understand their behaviour and thoughts. The vision must be for a church which dares to confront the fake, the untrue, the temporal thinking of the world and always extends grace, love and care. In order to reach young people, we must be real and our actions need to match what we teach. We must understand the developmental processes of young people and make room for their desire for change.

Personal Story 1: Steven, Malaysia

During my work in Malaysia with Campus Crusade, I met Steven, a 19-year-old college student. When Steven was about 14, he was invited with a group of friends to attend guitar classes at a local Christian church. He attended the classes because he enjoyed music and wanted to learn to play guitar. One year later, he attended a gospel camp and accepted Christ. He then became consistently involved in church activities. Only then did the church youth leaders begin to criticize his long hair and his earring. Steven felt frustrated and discriminated against because of the way the church leaders judged his appearance. They didn't even ask why he had an earring. In Chinese families in Malaysia, it is the custom for parents to pierce the ear of a physically weak male child and this is what had happened to Steven. Steven also felt like the church leaders had tricked him from the very beginning. When they invited him to the guitar class, they seemed accepting and friendly, but as soon as he became a committed member of the church, they began to judge his appearance and impose on him an unfair, superficial standard. Steven's story teaches us that we must be very careful not to use special programs to get youth into church, then pull a "bait-and-switch" once they make a commitment. Also, adults should resist judging youth by superficial, non-Biblical standards like appearance. Instead, adults should take the time to really get to know young people through genuine relationships.

Personal Story 2: Shuling, Malaysia

In Malaysia, we have found that a "youth centre" is a strategic tool for reaching our youth. Our youth centre, located near the University, is a place where young people can spend time during their breaks from classes. There are musical instruments available, magazines, computers and a welcoming environment where youth can hang out. One day, a non-Christian girl named Shuling was invited to our youth centre by a Christian friend. While she was there, she had an epileptic seizure. She was very embarrassed and ashamed, but her friend and the other Christian youth who were there immediately started to pray for her. When she recovered from her seizure, she was very relieved to see that she had not been rejected because of her seizure, but had been shown acceptance and love. She still attends the youth centre today to experience the community and fellowship of her friends. Shuling's story shows us the importance of teaching Christian youth to care for and love others and to share their faith through words and actions. It also shows the importance of providing youth with a place like our youth centre, where they feel safe and accepted.

A Perspective from Japan

There are basically two different youth cultures in Japan. One group is going along with the values of the Japanese Society. These young Japanese learn hard at school and at cram schools (from morning to night) to finally enter a big famous company and to make a career for themselves. They live to please their families and they live as much as possible in conformity to Japanese society. High school kids and students spend many hours at part time jobs, especially in the evening and at the weekend. In their rare free time these young

people can be found in the big department stores and malls spending lots of money for clothing, CDs and other things.

Another smaller group wants to be different from Japanese Society and has adopted a different lifestyle with different values. They try to escape societal pressure. Some of these young people drop out of school, consume drugs and alcohol and commit crimes. Some even withdraw from the world and reality. They refuse to leave their bedroom and live in self isolation. They are called "hikikomori". About one million Japanese, mostly young men, have this kind of visionless lifestyle.[2]

Deep inside, young Japanese have a longing to find meaning in life. But the problem is that society gives no room, no time to think about the basic questions as "Where I'm from? Where I'm going? What is life all about?" The parent generation is not used to think about these questions and does not have any answers except: "Study hard. Work hard. Earn lot of money. Have a nice family. And most of all: Don't bring any disgrace to the family."

Young people have more money and leisure time than their parents. There is a strong influence from the Western world through the media. To get a safe good job is not assured anymore because many companies are collapsing due to the current economic problems in Japan. Their questions are: "Which part time job offers me the highest salary?" "What is new, fashionable, cute,...?" "How can I pass the next exam?"... Though these questions may seem superficial, for young Japanese it is most important what they can see, touch and feel. To pass the next exam, to have the newest things and to enjoy life together with friends of their group is of their highest interest. Deeper questions like "Who am I?" "What is the meaning of life?" are not so much expressed although these questions are there somewhere deep inside.

Japanese society is a fatherless society. Some young Japanese have no chance to see their fathers or to speak to them for days, weeks or even months because the father is busy with his job. Also their mothers have no time for them because they are busy with their part time job(s) and with their hobbies. There is a great lack of real relationships. This is one reason why promiscuity continues to escalate alarmingly. The warm affection and love they cannot get at home they hope to find in numerous sexual relationships. The number of young Japanese who are infected by AIDS or who have other sexually related infections is rising.[3]

Sadly, lots of Japanese churches have a very traditional style and are not attractive for lots of young Japanese. They don't even know that there is a church around the corner. The image of Christian life is that you have to follow a lot of old, religious rules which nobody understands and that as a Christian you are not allowed to enjoy life anymore. Christianity is seen as something for old, weak people.

There are some growing churches that have a different attractive style with contemporary music, warm atmosphere and a biblical message that young people are able to understand. They have special outreach programs at beaches or in parks. They establish contacts with young Japanese where they are. In small groups young people find warm relationships they are longing for. The number of these churches is growing in recent years but there are still not enough churches like that. Besides, ministries among students are growing.

It is important to have time to build close relationships and time flexibility; love for young people who are so desperately searching for somebody who really cares for them and accepts them as they are; and lots of food!

The hope remains that many Japanese churches will start to pray that God may give them love for the lost Japanese youth generation, a vision to reach out to them and a heart to welcome them in the church and to give them a place to belong. We should pray that God may raise up new generation of young Japanese believers who confess that only Jesus is Lord and that is willing to make every sacrifice that is needed to build up the Church of Jesus Christ in Japan and all over the world.

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[2] Japan Harvest, Spring 2003: 6-7, 30
[3] Japan Harvest, Spring 2003: 6.

Youth Centre: Japan

A ministry in Inazawa, Japan, started the HOPE youth centre. This youth centre is connected to a local church, but in a different location. At this centre we seek to reach out to unevangelized Japanese young people by providing English/German/French language classes, sports programs and weekly events with lots of fun, games, workshops and short Christian messages. We also hold regular Bible Studies at the youth centre and occasional concerts and parties. The youth centre is important because it provides young people with a place for rest and fun. Our youth have a lot of pressure in their daily lives, as they study until late at night each day and have hardly any breaks. We are very flexible as we schedule events at the youth centre, to ensure that youth are able to come. Also, the location of the youth centre is key. It is on a main road, next door to a school and within walking distance of a major train station. Thus, the youth centre is highly visible and accessible to the Japanese young people of our area. As youth attend the classes and events at our youth centre, we build trusting relationships with them. As a result, we have seen more and more young people open up to Jesus and the gospel.

Case study from China: A Chinese Man's Story

Born into a family without a father – his mother divorced her husband when he was in her womb – he was raised up by grandparents.

At the age of sixteen, he was about to start working in a factory, while his elder sister became a drug addict. He himself was indulging in gambling. One day in 1991, he passed by one of the three churches in his city, which had just been allowed to open after the cultural revolution and was attracted by the music flowing out. He entered in and though the church was functioning more like a government department, he got the opportunity to read the Bible. During those four months, he was convinced gradually that Jesus – the "fiction character" mentioned in his textbook in school, was the Saviour that he needed and committed himself to this so-called "western superstition".

After thirteen years of a spiritual, emotional and intellectual healing process, he is now one of the most knowledgeable, Spirit-filled Christian leaders in the city. He, together with his beloved wife, pastor a congregation made up of people in their age group as well those of his parents' age.

His cousin had dropped out of school at the age of twelve, was led to Christ by his wife. She is now serving the Lord among minority people groups in China with the gifts of evangelism, leading and counselling and writing praise songs.

5.5 Europe - Eastern Europe

Perceived Needs

(a) External Needs

Eastern Europe continues to be a region in transition as post-Communist countries move from totalitarian governments and controlled economies to democratic capitalist societies. Understandably, this has a tremendous affect on the needs of youth in the region. Many youth face an uncertain economic future.   Job prospects often are limited, forcing many to leave their countries for better opportunities.   Those that stay find economic independence difficult to attain, delaying important life events like marriage.

Politically, there is a loss of faith in government. Changes are promised, but usually never materialize. Now that many have the opportunity to vote, they wonder if it really matters. Moreover, in both the economic and political realms, corruption often is rampant. The integrity gaps in these social institutions particularly makes it difficult to live out the Christian faith on a day to day basis. Religiously, many of the countries have experienced a renewal of national identity ties to either the Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic Churches. This has led to a paradox. As people experience more freedom to do business, to travel and to vote, many committed Christians, particularly Protestant evangelicals, find they are being marginalized and oppressed by the national churches.

(b) Internal Needs

The previously mentioned external factors play a large role in the internal needs of Eastern European youth. Many live a life without hope. There is a pervading negativism which tends to reign in the souls of youth. It is not surprising, then, that many youth lack motivation and ambition to be productive in daily life. Some of this lack of motivation comes from the need to be affirmed. Most youth in their education and in their families have not experience much encouragement. The education systems tend to produce an adversarial relationship between students and teachers that runs on a critical spirit. Therefore, many youth face an identity crisis steeped in a loss of self-esteem. Many Eastern European youth crave spiritual experiences. They find these experiences in a number of ways. Some fill their needs through the musical sensations found at night-clubs, concerts and raves. Others build a life philosophy that is a mixture of contradictory religions and superstitions. Without a clear voice to guide them, these youth tend to spiral down in a kaleidoscope of competing interests. Despite this need for spiritual experience, many youth remain atheistic or agnostic. When confronted with the question of the one, true God, the visceral reaction is often, "So, what?"

The instability of the chief institutions of Eastern European society is reflected in many unstable families. Many youth fail to receive proper care and guidance of their families. The region is littered with stories of relational estrangement, leading to individual isolation, a life of loneliness.

(c) Discipleship Needs

There is a dire need for healthy churches in this region. Youth need to see churches and church leaders that are open, transparent and accountable. Particularly, there is a need for trained youth workers who are good, positive role models for living the Christian life. Also, youth need Christian teaching and training in developing healthy relationships and they need help in making life decisions about a possible spouse.

Finally, there is a need for Christian youth to be bold in Eastern Europe. There is fear among many as they attempt to be Christian witnesses in a semi-oppressive and often indifferent societies. Family and social sanctions are real for committed Christians.

(d) Proposed Strategies for Eastern Europe

The overarching strategy for Eastern Europe must be to inspire the churches for intentional ministry among youth. Churches need to be shown the need and advantages of reaching youth in order to bring broader church renewal. The following strategies should be considered:

* Encourage church leaders to invest in youth with responsibility. Youth are the best evangelizers of youth.
* Employ evangelism strategies that are culturally relevant. This might include appropriately borrowing from Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic forms, exploring the use of indigenous art, and creating contemporary ethno-Christian music.
* Encourage local church youth leaders to write and produce resources that are culturally relevant in order to avoid over-reliance on copying Western ideas.
* Encourage large events and networking among evangelical youth workers.
* Present Christianity as experience and story rather than only academic doctrine.
* Provide meaningful and practical Christian experiences in mission and prayer.
* Establish internship programs to develop leaders and to provide mentors for rising youth leaders.
* Provide vocational training and to teach on how to be a Christian in various fields of employment.
* Break the taboo many churches have on talking about sex by providing significant biblical teaching on sex and marriage.
* Train pastors and youth leaders to be effective premarital counsellors.

Personal Story: Slobo, Serbia

Slobo grew up in a military family. He became a casual drug user, which exacerbated his short temper. He attended university, where he studied geo-politics. As part of the

ministry of IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students), lectures were sponsored that featured successful Christian business and political leaders. Slobo attended one of the lectures featuring a United States Congressman who included in his talk a short comment about the role of Jesus in his life. Slobo went out for coffee with Samuil, the local IFES leader following the lecture. They discussed many things, particularly the need for God in one's life. Over a period of time, Samuil introduced Slobo to other Christian students who befriended him. Slobo continued his spiritual pilgrimage, but could not bring himself to accept Jesus. Not only was the exclusivity of Jesus a barrier, but Slobo did not want to stop having sex with his girlfriend. Recently, Samuil received an SMS from Slobo indicating that he was willing to forego premarital sex. As repentance comes into Slobo´s life, Jesus is becoming more and more of a reality. This has happened through a multi-layered approach that engaged Slobo´s mind through academic lectures, engaged Slobo´s emotions through friendship and engaged Slobo´s soul through an encounter with the Incarnate God.

A perspective from the Czech Republic

In 1999, I moved to Prague, Czech Republic, where I was a part of an organization that placed Christian professors in secular universities. There is a growing youth culture in the Czech Republic. Since the fall of communism in 1989, many Czech youth started to look to the West for their fashion, music, language and lifestyle. The hip-hop and gangsta influences so prevalent in fashion in the USA are not as common in the Czech Republic, but they are definitely making inroads. These influences are more heavily felt in music, along with a continued affinity for techno. I cannot speak to influences in the Czech language, but one trend is that young people are more likely to choose English as a second language rather than German or Russian, which are more common for adults. Turning to lifestyle, the Czech university students that I taught desire to have a different lifestyle than their parents and grandparents. For them, this is usually defined economically as they attempt to make the most of their newfound freedom in a capitalistic system.

The experience of youth in the Czech Republic tends to be more uniform, as the Czech culture is more homogeneous. There are some rural/urban differences, but these are not as distinguishable. Czech young people tend to be more present and future oriented while older adults tend to be fixated on the past. The pace of the young in the Czech Republic is much faster than for older generations. Youth have a hesitant optimism that typically is not shared by adults. In interactions with Czech students, the following themes are evident:

Anti-Institutionalism: Czech youths, by and large, have a strong distrust of official institutions. They tend to equate Christianity with the institutional church; therefore, they want nothing to do with it. This institutional scepticism carries over to other areas, particularly politics. Working in concert with the anti-institutional fervour is a strong desire to preserve individual freedom. In the most recent anthropological and sociological studies, people living in formerly communist Eastern Europe have dramatically moved up the scale regarding radical individualism. This is a dramatic shift of worldview. I saw this constantly as numerous Czechs told me, "I don't want to be a part of a religion (or church, or Christianity) because I don't want anyone telling me what to believe."

There is a generation of spiritual dabblers: In spite of the disinterest in the official church, I did run across many students who are interested in spirituality. They may study the traditions of a religion or dabble in certain practices, but they are extremely hesitant to fully embrace any religious worldview.

Another feature is a spirit of disillusionment and ambition: Many Czech youths operate with a general pessimism concerning life. They have no real faith or expectations in traditional institutions and no abiding hope that things will get better. Gone is the afterglow that the fall of communism initially brought. That is not to say that Czech young people are stymied by the current context. A growing group sees this time as an opportunity for economic gain and is working diligently for higher material goals.

A significant question among Czech students is how can I make a better life for myself? Often this question is answered through material and economic gain, but there also is a strong attitude among some who want to leave the world a better place by working for

environmental concerns and other magnanimous efforts. The obvious difference betweeen the young and older generation is that Czech youth are growing up in a democratic-capitalist country and their parents grew up in a communist country. This shift of sensibilities and value structure is not without both joy and pain. Many youth today do not experience and feel the obvious traumas that their parents and grandparents went through under totalitarian rule. So, in one sense, there is a sense of gratitude that Czech youth today are able to avoid such difficulties. What I observed, however, as an outsider, are many wounds being suffered in marriage and family relationships. There tends to be an agonizing emotional distance among many that develops between husbands and wives and parents and children

Czech youth cherish their freedom above all else. As a result, their greatest fear is losing this freedom. Young people do not want anyone to tell them what to do. They dislike advice from outsiders. As one Czech told me, "I think it will take decades before people lose this general distrust."

Czech youth generally say that they want the good life. While the definition of a good life varies, most would include the following things: freedom, good personal relationships, enough money, health, education, travel.

There are isolated pockets of activity among youth by the church, but it tends to be small and ineffective. There is not a lot of specialized outreach in the Czech Republic, but one church is doing interesting ministry. The Methodist Church in Plzen works with drug addicts, guiding them into a life of sobriety and relationship with God. They do this with a recovery program that features special houses where addicts who are committed to being drug-free come together to live in community with Christian counsellors. Also, the church operates a tea-house for evangelism outreach. Through these and other efforts the church has grown significantly in the past few years.

5.6 Europe - Western Europe
Perceived needs of Young People in Western Europe

In many cases social needs derive from inner needs and vice versa: the attempts to find answers to inner needs produce social needs. In that way many needs are interrelated. It's a perpetual circle.

(a) Inner needs

There is a need for identity. Music presents itself as defining styles of clothes, style defines groups or "scenes", thus music helps to relate and identify oneself. In many cases, young people understand that commercial products and material things do not satisfy. The need for spirituality emerges, but consumer industry reacts to that by artificially 'spiritualizing' their products. Authenticity is a key to the young generation. This is a chance and a necessity for the church to reach young people.

Young people go for high standards. That's a possible reason for the success of perceived radical Christian groups like 'Jesus Freaks' in Germany or 'Vision' in the United Kingdom or "Jesus Revolution" in Norway. There is a need for being radical and for leading a wholesome lifestyle, which the church can offer.

> One outstanding example for specialized youth ministry in Germany is the TenSing (Teenagers Singing) movement. There are 170 TenSing groups all over Germany and over 500 groups in Europe. TenSing started in Norway in 1968 and works with the 3C-Model:
> **Creativity**: TenSing tries to develop the gifts of the young people by creating a "You can get it"-atmosphere.
> **Culture**: TenSing takes the culture of the youth seriously and tries to integrate it.
> **Christ**: Christ is the centre of TS. TenSing is process and project orientated. The aim of TenSing is that the young people develop their own show, a mixture of singing, acting and dancing.

(b) External needs

Drug abuse is on the increase. One of many reasons could be the break-up of the family, many young people come from broken families or live in so-called "patchwork

families". The use of drugs together with other young people meets the need of belonging to somewhere (a group or some kind of 'family'). There is also a need for learning to manage everyday life which is too difficult for teenagers. There is a lack of role models. A number of youth drop out, live "off the welfare system", cheating the system and are unable to organise their lives, because there is no one who shows them how. They have ultimate choice but don't know what to do. There is a conflict of several cultures.

(c) Needs of Christian Young People

Young people in Europe are sometimes apathetic, they have no distinctive political opinion. Young people in the church are very much the same, quiet and nice. On the other hand there are the immigrant youth, some of which tend to be more aggressive. This often causes a cultural conflict. There is a need to learn to handle this conflict. Being radically committed to Jesus is too uncomfortable for many. The need of role models again is big. Most young people have no Christian knowledge at all, whereas young Christians seem to live in a totally different world. It is very difficult for young Christians to communicate the gospel. Communication of the gospel seems to be very difficult and too intellectually demanding for most. Christian festivals are important for encouragement, but they are not the answer to all the needs of young people. The important work takes place at a grassroots level. Discipleship is not about being a Christian superstar, but about everyday life. The needs are needs of the everyday life. Therefore the answers must be given in everyday life terms.

The situation in predominantly Catholic countries is somewhat different. Young people are in touch with church all their lives and often begin to reject everything that is connected with it. They still have a hunger for spirituality, but the problem is ho to overcome the prejudices against the gospel, which derive from contact with the established church.

(d) Strategies for local churches in Western Europe

We need to find people who have the passion to reach out to young people. One does not have to be young or a full time worker, but simply willing to reach out holistically. It is important to make real contact with young people. There is a variety of creative ways in which this could be done, e.g. through setting up specific workshops like learning to repair bicycles or work on cars, DJ-ing and graffiti. There is a need for Christian youth clubs, gyms, drop-in cafés, free internet service and offering places where people can just be together and talk.

> "This generation has been exposed to more evil than any other generation and to add to that in the Western world, the influence of the church has dramatically decreased, there is less scripture taught in schools than ever before, in the name of tolerance and religious freedom - they are being presented only one end of the story and it is filling their minds with evil."

There is a need to get involved, like using social facilities that are already there, such as an unpaid worker. We must get involved in secular community work, be part of the life of young people, be around where they live. This must not necessarily be social work as such, the need is rather to make contact. There is a need for modelling service as an example for being a Christian. The Christian life must become visible. When authentic contact is established, evangelistic events can be used to lead young people to Christ. Somewhere during this process there comes the point when the gospel must be explained and an invitation given to follow Jesus. Part of the necessary strategy could be to encourage young people to build their own churches that are suitable for their own culture. In youth culture, symbols are important for one's identity (e.g. WWJD wristbands). There is a need to create symbols that speak to young people, to which they can relate to. There is also a need to create spaces where young people can be and find God – not only "places to hang out and meet", but also "sacred spaces". These do not have to be buildings, but can come into being wherever people meet in the name of Jesus.

There is a need for empowerment. We need to send out young people to other young people. 'To make contact – to lead them to Jesus – to teach and disciple – to send out" is in fact a circle. We have to courageously jump into that circle. Within this process building up and living deep and real relationships with young people is central.

A perspective from England

There are many youth subcultures which are 'marked' in a whole variety of ways; a whole range of musical, fashion, language tastes exist which mark some 'in' and others 'out'. A huge difference between this and previous generations is that there is a real acceptance of the diverse sub-cultures which exist. There is no longer the pressure to conform to one youth cultural grouping as there was 20-30 years ago – 'anything goes' would be a good motto for this generation.

The social environment such as the home or peers, plays a huge part in determining the sub-cultures to which a young person belongs. An over-generalization would be to say that those from more affluent backgrounds may be drawn to sport or music sub-cultures. Equally those from poorer backgrounds may be drawn to street or gang culture through lack of money and therefore opportunity to do anything else. So money, peer pressure and social environment play a significant role in attracting young people to various groupings. This generation views life through the lenses of materialism, relativism and hedonism. Meaning is found through the pursuit of pleasure: 'What I am is what I purchase, consume, experience', rather than 'what I produce or contribute to the world'. It's a very *me*-centred generation – takers rather than givers. There is an interest in spirituality but as a consumer product or experiential thing rather than a life-long commitment. Young people have a very sceptical view of authority and large bureaucratic institutions – respect for authority figures such as police, ministers and politicians is at an all time low. There is a very carefree attitude towards life – 'eat, drink and be merry….' – concern about the 'now' rather than the future.

On one hand young people have more opportunities than ever to 'go anywhere' and 'be anything'. They are sold a dream by the media that they can be whatever they want to be and yet on the other hand there is great disappointment when such dreams are not realistic or achievable through lack of finances.

The main questions of meaning appear to be: "When will I experience my next experiential high?" and, "Will I be loved and accepted?" Such questions are often implicitly articulated rather than explicitly, through behaviour, music, dance, substances and internet. Technology has changed the world! Particularly, the internet is where young people have access to information (good and bad) and in this way they have access to communication with people all over the world – the world is now a global village. Coupled with that is the significant breakdown in family and community life. What is family? It can vary from one young person to the next and there is a lack of stability and security within it. Improved technology has also caused people to commute to work or school and so the close knit geographical community is a thing of the past. Families are also living apart from one another. Community now centres in a common interest rather than family or geography.

The United Kingdom is now a multi-faith society and young people are exposed to various people groups and religions. There is greater openness to diversity, both sexual and racial, yet simultaneously there is an increase in xenophobia. The boundaries in regard to the portrayal of sexuality are being eroded year by year and thus the pressure from to experiment sexually is increasing. The media is becoming increasingly oppressive pushing the boundaries and therefore validating how we can live.

The greatest hurt trauma is in regard to the breakdown of relationships – in the family and beyond. What does it mean to belong to a family or community? Young people are desperate to be loved and accepted and seek to fulfil that longing through joining cultures and gangs. However, these are often made up of young people all trying to search for meaning and identity. They are therefore 'temporary' communities – only useful for as long as needs are being met – they are transient. There is a longing for genuine relationship and acceptance.

Most of the hurts and traumas are deep within and they know there is a deep longing but they can't articulate it. Many are a like the Prodigal Son, "born into a distant country", never having known the love and intimacy of the father. They know they are missing something but don't know what it is or how to express it

Many young people cannot dream – for various reasons they no longer have the ability to. Many that do have hopes and dreams would be thinking in the short term rather than long term – "When is my next good time?" Others do dream but dream in fantasy rather than reality, dream of fame and fortune, a result of the strong influence of the media.

There are many churches and organizations seeking to reach young people. The situation has changed hugely in the last 25 years with churches at least recognizing the need to reach out to young people. Many, the more affluent, are employing youth specialists to try and tackle the problem. However, all that is happening is just a drop in the ocean. Young people are leaving the Church and it is not attracting young people into the church. Resources and person power are hard to come by. The increased pressures on people to be working make it increasingly hard to recruit volunteers.

My vision is to create a "missional community". Rather than seeking to drag young people into church, to create church in the sub-cultures that already exist such as in the DJ workshop. This releases people to create church where they are – at work, at school. Church is often seen as the building rather than a verb – an action, doing word. Jesus defined church by saying "*Where two or three are gathered in my name…..*" worshipping and focusing on Him. The church must be characterized by genuine community to counter the lack of relationship society now has – create surrogate families where people are unconditionally loved and accepted. The church must change its understanding of what church is! We must get church out the building, we must think "people" not "institution", "mission" or "maintenance". We must release a whole army of people as missionaries in their work places rather than leaving it to the paid professionals.

A Perspective from Southern Germany

In Germany and in my case in Southern Germany, in the Black Forest, there is not one specific youth culture, rather there are different youth cultures that exist next to each other and can not be easily compared. When we look for commonalities, we find some words that unite young people in Germany. Some of the terms seem to contradict each other, but that is typical for youth culture in Germany. Youth are looking at the future in a positive way, they do not want to miss anything, they are fixed on today, they are open for new things like technology, fashion and hypes. They are religious in a pluralistic way:

- they are materialistic - money, status symbols, material things;
- are family-oriented - they dream of having their own well-functioning family;
- are egoistic - always thinking of themselves first and have no trust and no interest in politics and institutions.

Young people's attitude towards the future is more positive than their parent's attitude, who, because of the economic situation, have a gloomy picture of the future. The greatest longing of young people in the different subcultures is to be taken seriously and to be accepted as they really are. With all their fears and dreams, their feelings and mistakes. In a world that is becoming more and more technical, real and lasting relationships are hard to find and are more precious than ever. They possess almost everything, but they always have the feeling that they come off worst and miss the important things in lives. They are afraid that the value of their lives depends on what they are able to achieve in this society through their gifts, knowledge, looks, creativity. Their real being instead does not receive attention. Another problem is the break-down of relationships with their parents, especially the father-son-relationships. Parents as well as children often feel misunderstood.

The promise of the post-modern society to have the chance to do everything and that everything is possible, but in everyday life, a person's background, family, intelligence, capacity and relationships play an important role. According to the survey of Shell 2002 the five main fears of German young people are:
1. Terrorist attacks
2. Bad economic situation
3. Pollution of the environment
4. War

5. Unemployment

These are followed by private fears regarding relationships (friendships, friends, peer group), about being accepted, concerning emotional stability, illness and others. According to the survey of Shell 2002 these things are the most important for young Germans: Friendship, partnership, family life, taking responsibility, creativity and independence.

Then there are the very special and individual dreams of every one who tries to find his/her way in life. Many churches in Germany do not have a youth ministry. In our church we have a growing teen- and youth ministry based on 15 small groups and a variety of many groups, projects and services. We have an evangelistic youth event several times a year which is called "Big Bang". This service is attended by 400 to 500 young people, followed by discipleship courses and workshops (music, dance, creative things and social projects).

> In Germany, "youth" is put on a pedestal by almost everybody. As a result, many people in their twenties, thirties and forties try to dress, act and be young."

The most important is a shift of paradigm away from classical evangelization (conversion) to a holistic mission (salvation for the people.) The narrow and wrong understanding of the gospel has led to a ministry of preaching and not to a ministry serving the people and taking them and their needs seriously. Jesus came to save and heal people in all dimensions. We have to work together with young people. We have to provide young people with space, create for them places to meet, give them opportunities to do things and thus take them seriously. Through that we will automatically bring them in touch with our faith. How this is actually done has to be decided in every town and city. The motto must be not working "for" young people, but "with" young people and building a church with them. We must ask them what they think is best, and take them seriously and encourage them. We must working with and invite young people - through our life and role model - to walk with Jesus themselves.

Case study from Marburg, Germany: Living the Gospel in a Shop Window

One reason why so many young people in Germany are not attracted to the gospel of Jesus and to a life of discipleship is that they often do not have a chance to look at it closely enough. Christian churches have a problem with not being seen. Many people do not have a clue that there is a church right next to them. Living as a Christian is an attractive lifestyle. The gospel of Jesus has the power to heal, to set the captives free and to release from sin (Romans 1:16). One group of youth workers in Marburg, Germany, wanted to make Christianity more visible to non-Christian young people, who would never ever enter a church building. They wanted to give them the opportunity to be somewhat part of the adventure of being a Christian. They rented a shop at the centre of town and furnished it as an apartment. The kitchen and living room could be seen through the shopping window (though the bedrooms could not be seen). Additionally, they turned one room into a chapel, a prayer room in which the kids could find out what prayer is all about and in which they could experience prayer in many different creative ways: for example, painting a picture on the wall, writing poems and prayers and pinning it to a tree, writing sins or other things they wanted to get rid of on a piece of paper and throwing them into a toilet etc. There was also a large room in which events took place such as prayer concerts, parties and open microphone nights when youth could share anything they created. This project tied in with the Germany (and central European) "Jesus House" satellite mission, which reached several hundred thousand young people through five evening programs that were seen on screens all over in churches, clubs, auditoriums etc.

In Marburg, ten young Christians moved into the apartment along with six adult coaches, who served as mentors and guides for them. This group lived together for ten days, doing the normal tasks of everyday life together. The whole purpose was to show young non-Christians that being a Christian does not only mean visiting church on Sunday, but that it is something that involves every facet of life and that it is far away from being boring, but that it is exciting and powerful instead. The effect of this experiment was astonishing. Very soon the little shop was packed full with young people from eight o'clock in

the morning until ten o'clock at night. The vast majority of them did not know anything about the gospel of Jesus. What attracted them to come and stay was the peaceful atmosphere, the joy and the laughter. It became obvious that Jesus, Himself, was living together with the group in that place and his presence made the difference.

One young man who was new to the shop entered the building, raised his arms in the air and exclaimed quite dramatically, "My home!" He then collapsed into a sofa and stayed there, drinking coffee and chatting.

What made this so powerful was that it was not a program, but that it focused on sharing real life experiences together with Jesus. The outcome of this experiment was left to God. God surprised even those who started this ministry because many young lives were touched by His power, a considerable number of young people became Christians and some were healed. Discussions centred on Jesus all day long with young people who never really had thought about what being a Christian was all about.

The very centre of this adventure was not a publicity stunt (though it would have been a very successful one since many newspapers and TV stations reported about the experiment), but it was a concentrated form of what the church according to the New Testament is supposed to be, a fellowship of believers open to anybody, in which Jesus is present. (www.10-days.de)

> "There is a genuine desire to change the world, to reduce terrorism, poverty and hunger, but there is a lack of guidance in how to do that."

Case Study from Scotland

I work for Youth for Christ in Inverness, Scotland. Two years ago we began a new project to reach into Inverness High School. There are five schools in Inverness and this is the worst economically and educationally. It is in an "urban priority area" meaning it is poor and suffers with a lot of problems such as drugs, alcohol and family breakdown.

The idea is to see the whole community changed and renewed by discovering Jesus. To do this I work in one school full time becoming a part of the community and modelling Jesus to the young people. The school does not pay me, I am free. Which means, they are happy to have me in the school as long as I am professional and respect them. Over the two years I have gained trust and respect which has given me more freedom.

In the school I help with Religious Education classes, run after-school clubs, work alongside pre excluded and excluded pupils, take assemblies and run a lunch time club, as well as many other things. Through the incarnational work 20 young people have become Christians and many more have taken huge steps towards God. As a result of this in partnership with a local Methodist Church, Youth for Christ have started "Revolution": a place where young people can become disciples of Jesus. It is new and challenging, but together we are learning how to be Church.

Case Study: YOUr Church, Essen, Germany

Essen, the city I live in, hosts Europe's big youth fair, called "YOU" once a year. Within 4 days about 300,000 young people come to visit that fair, pay for the entrance and expect fun, action and long for new experiences. There is bungee jumping, skiing on artificial snow, swimming, basketball, beach volley ball, cross biking, a lot of music on big stages, European pop stars, great chill out areas, a cinema, restaurants, magazines, styling and beauty stations, casting contests and much more. All this is offered and sponsored by companies like Nike, Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Nestle, Nokia, L'Oreal, and one of the greatest German radio stations and television.

How should Christians respond to such an event? We could be apologetic and preach against consumerism. We could just ignore it. We could be afraid of so many young people, who never come to church, who do not come from Christian family backgrounds, who are just ordinary German youngsters. On the other hand, we could be part of it, because we are interested in them. Because we believe that they are looking for something

which we can give them. Because they do not just want to buy, fill their bags and stomachs and go. They are longing for something that can fill their heart. So we decided to jump into the middle of this crazy fair.

However, the question is, what could we offer? We offered the best we have! We did not even try to compete with all the big names, because we did not have the money, but mainly, because we were really convinced that we had something better to bring to them. We created "YOUr Church" and 300,000 young people were able to find one place in this huge event, where they could rest, where they could talk, get comforted, where somebody would ask for their name and who they are, we would offer prayer, testimonies, Christian music and videos, give them a Bible and spend time with them.

Just imagine three fifteen year old boys coming into our hall, entering "YOUr Church" - their church on the YOU. A cool smile on their face, hip clothes. Asking: "What can we do here?" "You can pray." "Praying, what is that?" "Praying is talking with God." "Okay, do it." "Would you maybe share, who you are, where you come from?" "They looked at each other and started talking sharing some of their concerns and then we prayed. They asked: "Can I also do this at home?" "Yes, you can." "Do I then have to know something more?" "You could take some time and listen and I can give you a Bible."

This is only one little story, but we experienced many of them. We have been involved in YOU for four consecutive years now and every time found the money for it and the 120 volunteers we needed. Elderly Christians have been very generous by donating money and supporting the whole project with their prayers, while young Christians were very thankful for this opportunity to share their faith and pray for their generation.

5.7 Indian Subcontinent

Perceived Needs

For youth on the Indian Subcontinent, life is dominated by the historical family and cultural traditions that have been the same for many generations. A growing number of youth are being influenced by Western culture through the invading media. As they learn about the affluence and freedom of young people in the west, they desire the same and those values are conflicting with values of their parents and grandparents. This conflict is creating a growing generation gap as youth strive for independence and their elders resist such change.

Socially, needs are great for role models in all parts of society. From pastors to grandparents, political leaders to public figures, adults are not setting positive examples for young people. Corruption is common in this society that greatly favours the privileged class. There is no intentional leadership development to encourage youth to have a better future. Also, political leaders are recruiting and training youth for terrorism, taking advantage especially of those living in poverty. Educational disparity because of availability and expense is only making the social situation for young people worse. Religiously, blasphemy laws (speaking against Muhammad) and other forms of persecution make evangelism and open expressions of Christian faith difficult and sometimes dangerous.

In the specific Christian context, there has been a change from the historic mission compound-centred culture as youth go out and compete in the open marketplace. The major issue is that of Church leaders not being good role models. Very few live lives of biblical integrity, are servant leaders, or have any trust in the Christian youth. Many church leaders are also building up their own family members inappropriately, living luxuriously and procuring the best education for their families without helping others. In most of the region, there is little affordable education for pastors or youth workers. Another problematic issue is created by foreign missions. Many are creating too many church options and missions so youth are confused about which is right or best. Their poor mission strategies and malpractice of missionaries by using financial incentives as they compete for converts is leading to a large number of people going from mission to mission to auction off the opportunity to lead them to Christ. Emerging mission works of Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults are leading to even more spiritual confusion among youth.

Suggested Strategies

Broadly speaking, Christians living and working on the Indian subcontinent can improve the church's effectiveness in reaching and discipling youth in several ways. The most important of these is to specifically challenge Christian leaders to lead lives of integrity, modelling Christ-likeness for the young generation. By holding pastors and their ministries accountable for spiritual and financial matters, youth will have many more positive examples of living the Christian life. One specific way this has begun to have a positive impact is through the improving theological education of younger pastors.

When it comes to family issues, ministries need to enable communication between generations. This dialogue is necessary to help youth understand the history and perspectives of their elders. It can also help the older generation better understand the emerging attitudes, desires and experiences of the youth. Seminars might be one way to accomplish this, although there are certainly many other options as well. Hopefully as the generations begin to interact and genuinely listen to one another, this will foster a growing a desire for adults to enter into discipling and mentoring relationships with the youth.

The church also needs to help people learn to adapt to Western influence and emerging technologies in culturally appropriate ways rather than resisting them. Young people are becoming more and more exposed to new ideas and this will only increase. Ignoring this reality is futile and dangerous, so Christians must learn how to use this reality as an advantage rather than be afraid of it. This could provide another point of connection between youth and adults because youth tend to adopt and understand emerging trends more quickly. Adults can help youth think about appropriate uses of new ideas and technology while youth helps adults learn to use them.

Another important strategy is to help youth learn about opportunities to finance education through scholarships. Emmanuel Ministry in Bangladesh is an example of a ministry that is doing this. They research scholarship opportunities and share this knowledge with families looking for college funding. Along this same line, helping youth find jobs is another important strategy. There are many churches that share information about job openings with young people in their congregations.

To address the growing confusion about various denominations, mission groups, and cults, there are a few strategies that could be used. One might be to create some standards for beginning new churches or ministries. Other nations have organized agencies that register or track churches and mission groups, which then helps to hold them accountable. It may also be possible for existing groups to unify efforts to foster cooperation and set positive examples for youth. As the need for more youth workers becomes greater, more educational opportunities arise. Some of these are formal, leading to college degrees, and others are seminars last just a few days. Regardless, far too few people can afford to attend these training opportunities. The churches need to be creative about finding ways to finance especially national interdenominational youth leaders' conferences so more youth workers can learn to be effective.

A Perspective from India

There is a clearly defined youth culture which is connected with life style. 90% of the youth are part of this culture. There is only one youth subculture. Young people lead a life without any guide, they feel themselves free from others. They only think about fun, want to spend their time in gossiping and watching movies. They say: "We are living in this world". On the other hand, their parents live a life of simplicity, fear the Hindu gods and worship them very piously. Their parents believe in rebirth, purification by taking a dip in Ganges river, or believe that if they will donate blood to their goddess, then they will go to heaven.

Young people do not like others to interfere with their way of life. At the same time they are afraid of death. Their hope is to be a rich, popular and influential person and they dream to be heroes of this world.

In my rural area, the church is not giving enough emphasis on youth. They need proper guidance, inspiration, and encouragement from their parents and elders. The church is not really involved in specialized outreach to young people. They only give Bible lessons

and organize an occasional youth seminar each year. If we give attention to young people, if we gather and guide them and give them priority in ministry, then they will follow the Lord and extend the kingdom of Christ. They need encouragement and proper guidance. The youth should gather periodically and be ministered to by an experienced leader. We should conduct seminars for youth leaders on the district level and monitor them properly. The future church will be led by new leaders who are the members of the youth generation. The church must emphasize prayer, provide training and assist the young people in meeting their needs.

A perspective from Pakistan

The cultural marks of youth culture are a materialistic approach to life, a certain lifestyle and music. Almost 75% of the young people are part of youth culture. There are several varieties of youth culture. Some are involved in sexual activities, some of then are making plans to earn money as soon as possible and some of them are doing wrong things because of depression. Every group tries to attract other groups. They think that they have to understand life totally in a short period of time. They show through body languages, styles and ways of talking that they have everything in life and want to find their own way of living life. They don't heed their elders' advice. The present youth has very good heart and mind and they are attracted to short-term joy or satisfaction. They want to experience everything. If they are guided in a good way, they could be very fruitful. They have the potential to be useful Christians.

Right now our youth take life as 'a bed of roses'. Their purpose of life is to get money, have a lot of material goods and get married on an emotional basis – rather than in contracted marriages. They don't want to work hard to get a good life standard, but look for shortcuts to success. They don't believe in long term planning. They also express their questions by showing frustration.

Young people have experienced that they were not given proper attention, time and care by their elders. Their ideas and feelings were not given importance by their elders. They consider that they are underestimated and that there is a communication gap in their families. They need somebody with whom they can share their ideas feelings and emotions and who will take them seriously. One of the greatest problems and traumas of young people is unemployment, lack of trust in young leadership and the communication gap.

The greatest fear they have is related to an insecure future, which leads to a lack of confidence. Yet they dream of success in every field of life. They hope for support and guidance from their elders.

The church in Pakistan has no time or energy to reach youth. The main reason the shortage of devoted pastors. In my view, some of the pastors seem to have a materialistic approach towards life and not a strong faith in God. Because of involvement in all sorts of things, they do not find time for youth activities. They only spend some hours in the church on Sundays. Maybe this is not generally true, but for some it seems that they see their ministry like any other job.

Some churches, however, offer programs for young people: youth seminars, healing crusades, etc. It is mostly parachurch organizations which are more involved in activities like youth seminars, fun fairs, bible studies in colleges and schools.

The church must begin to use modern technologies for evangelism. We must trust young people and allow them time to understand the full implication of a biblical world view. We must not pressurize them to follow Jesus right away. They need time and have freedom to go through a process in which they can make decisions for themselves. Our involvement should be at the guidance level. My vision for the church is to get actively involved in every group of people. It must be the source of spiritual satisfaction. The church must bring positive changes according to the needs of the time. Part of this comes through the use of music, through modern communication and mostly through personal contacts.

5.8 Oceania

Needs of the youth of Oceania

A number of key needs have been identified with regard to how the church should respond to reach the young people of the Oceania region. These needs are what we consider should be addressed by those who are involved in youth ministry if they want to be effective in communicating the gospel to those within the 12-25 window.

The need to be met where they are

We need to free young people to reach young people, we need to show them through our actions and words that they matter, that what they bring to the church is okay, that who they are is okay. As a church we need to identify sub-cultures as a mission field.

The Need for Relationships

A poor quality of home life due to absent parents (whether that be through divorce, single parent homes or working parents) means that young people now need to look outside the family unit for their key relationships and hence they need to find a place where they are accepted and can feel that they belong. At their very heart and core, young people (and in truth all people) desire meaningful relationships – we are wired for community and relationship and we will do anything to find it.

Commitment

Commitment flows from the need for a relationship - young people need to know that they matter. Those that lead them need to model commitment to them. The current generation lacks trust and they need to see in our actions and words that we value them and are not going to walk out on them, but rather be there for the long term. Our challenge is to learn to model the commitment that Jesus has for us – to model it in our relationship with Jesus and in our relationship with them. We need to give them our time. Young people spell "love" as "time" and this is the language we need to learn to speak.

Independence versus Interdependence

Our society continues to promote the need for independence: that we are to look out for ourselves, achieve what we can for ourselves. To be anything other than independent is to be looked upon as weak. Young people today have been sold this lie and it has become almost a perceived need, but in truth the need is **interdependence**. That is to be part of something, to be in community, to have others around you that you can depend upon. The body of Christ model, the image of the Acts 2 church is the need. As the church we need to live the model and promote that lifestyle – our dependence is not upon ourselves, but upon each other and foundationally upon God.

Case Study: The Samoan Family Model

Within family units which are based on Christian morals and standards, young people grow up knowing where they belong. They know where they fit in the community, they help each other out in areas such as school work, taboo issues and general support. They then discover self worth, are encouraged to support and assist the older generation and their self-identity is clear. This speaks of the ideal community environment – it speaks of the concept of "Interdependence" – knowing one's place within the bigger picture and being part of something.

A Need to be Heard

We must give young people a voice, listen to and value what they have to say. They have a desire to communicate, to influence the world in which they live. They have a need to be heard. For far too long the church in the South Pacific islands have perceived young people as a group that should be "seen and not heard". That they should just assimilate into the church as previous generations have. The problem is that this generation is one that has too many other options and to many other avenues, plus they are a generation with something to say. They live in a world that is far from perfect in so many ways. This has generated a generation that is no longer content to just run with the status quo, they want to change the world in which they live, they are a generation that craves importance.

Proposed Strategy

The key areas that were identified for reaching the youth generation in the South Pacific region (Oceania) are:

- Have at least one person in the church available for young people and encourage this person to train others to listen to young people.
- Encourage networking of churches and para-church organisations working with young people.
- Encourage churches to find an expert to help them identify sub-cultures within the neighbourhood that can be affirmed and reached.
- Encourage churches to embrace what young people have to bring and reshape "church" to suit. Do this by identifying gifts and talents of young people and encouraging them and giving them the opportunity to then express these gifts and talents.
- Encourage churches to look for intentional ways to impart the knowledge and heritage of their culture (within the island context) – educating them as to where they come from – to discover and promote the relationship between faith and identity.
- Develop resources appropriate to youth – oral, written, interactive, experiential, group environment.
- Meet them where the are.
- Promote the relationship between faith and identity.

A Story from Samoa: The Need to be Heard

A young guy aged around twenty-two dropped by the Youth for Christ Samoa shop-front one morning requesting somebody to talk to. The volunteer at the shop let him know that he was on his way out to pick up his child from school and that if he could come back at around 1.30 pm, he would be there and willingly to talk through anything he wanted then. The young man seemed quite happy with that. At around 1.30pm he returned to the Youth for Christ office to find nobody there. By now, he was desperate to talk and he had nobody to connect with and share his problems. In his mind he had one answer – suicide. So he left the office, put a gun to his head and shot himself. The only answer he could find to solve what was a "simple" girlfriend relationship problem was to end his life. Why? Because he had nobody to talk to, nobody to connect with, nobody willing to give him the time he needed.

This example shows the need of young people today: relationships and to be heard. This can be a matter of life and death.

A Case Study from New South Wales: Shop 16 -
Meeting Youth where they are at

SHOP 16 is a youth centre that was developed in Reservoir, Victoria (Australia) in response to the need of youth at risk within the area. Reservoir has large unemployment problems and students within the local high school have a large dropout rate. Cath and Rick started the centre two years ago in response to the increasing drop-out rate of students at the local high school were they where working through social outreach programs. They wanted to meet the needs of the students within a social context to help, encourage and equip them so that they could finish their schooling and thereby have a greater shot at life. Shop 16 is a shop-front situated opposite Reservoir High School that offers programs for primary and secondary school students. The programs range from computer literacy, homework assistance, a drop in centre and a youth room. The church also runs in linkage with SHOP 16 a youth ministry and kids club.

The statements of young people who come to the centre speak for themselves.
- "I would have left school already if it hadn't been for Rick and Cath, instead I am blitzing my exams".
- "I would still be repeating Year 9 instead of doing well at Year 10 if it hadn't been for SHOP 16".
- "They aren't like teachers, they are the kind of people that you can trust, who won't let you down, who will always be there. They encourage us, not tell us what to do."

SHOP 16 is an example of the church reaching across social boundaries to meet young people where they are and assisting them, encouraging them, supporting them – making a difference in their lives both now and eternally.

SHOP 16 is an example of the church stepping out from the four walls that contain it, reaching out into the community and meeting young people where they are and letting them know through actions that they are worth something.

"The adult generation in some ways has given up on the youth, in terms of control and are now more than ever, more concerned with their own lives, their own futures - on the surface the culture look extremely different - yet at the heart the two cultures are the same - searching for meaning, searching for their place in the world, searching for something."

A perspective from Tonga

Fashion is one of the marks of youth culture. Normally Tongans are very modest when it comes to dressing up to go to church or to the office. Because of the strong influence of movies from the western world, young people follow the same fashion, like men having earrings, girls having tattoos and girls showing their belly buttons. Music is another mark: most of the young people like Hip Hop music, Rap, Reggae etc. Then there is the use of slang or even sarcastic words. Dating habits have changed. It used to be that the boy had to go to the girl's house and talk to the parents of the girl and talk to the girl at her house, but now they just meet at the street corner.

Right now in Tonga the youth are getting into gangs. This is against Tongan lifestyle, against traditional values and against Christian doctrines and values. The Tongan youth culture of this gang lifestyle is quite different. They do not have to be street kids or move in with the members of the gang. They can stay under the roof of their parents' home and yet they daily get together in their gang. There is a big difference between the youth and adult generation. The attitude of the youth has changed. The taste of fashion, music and values are very different from the adult generations. Young people show resistance to the Tongan value system which is Christianity and traditional culture. They don't find it attractive and therefore ignore it. Tongan youth taste the creamy side of life, walking on the paved road which makes life easy for them compared to the life of their parents' generation. They desire to live a much easier life. They desire to belong internationally and locally. They desire to be approved and belong.

Tongan youth of today have more opportunities to pursue a degree from Universities compared to their parents. When it comes to the age of marriage, more and more youth get married at 18, 19 and 20, while their parents married at the age of 30 and up. In their parents' generation to get married, the man should have a house of his own and the woman should have accumulated enough furniture to be ready for the wedding day. But Tongan youth of today do not take this as a prerequisite for marriage compared to their parents' generation. Youth have more leisure than their parents.

Young men experience both physical and emotional pain, from being turned off or from the break-up of a relationship with a girlfriend. They are wounded not only emotionally, but also physically, especially when being beaten up while at a party or going with a gang. Young women are hurt by parents, when they are misunderstood by them. They fear being turned down or hated. They fear death or that something bad will happen to their loved ones. They also fear their parents if they have been found out doing something wrong.

They also have hopes and dreams. They hope for the best that they can have in life. They want to be successful in whatever field they aspire, to be rich, to be most popular, to get married and have a good and prosperous future. Many activities and programs for youth have been initiated by the churches and other youth ministries to reach the youth of today. Activities like Bible studies, camps, outings, outreaches through drama and action, through songs and also joint fellowship with other youth. Churches are getting involved in programs to increase awareness of among young people on drugs alcohol awareness. This is done through a weekend live-in camp held at the church halls. Telephone counselling called LifeLine is a church based ministry in which more than 50% of the calls are youth problems. There are church youth who visit and minister to the prison inmates. Youth are involved in teaching children through Bible clubs.

The need of ministry among the youth is evident. For one-on-one friendship evangelism, or the establishment of a youth centre, which we do not have in Tonga yet. Also we do not have a campsite for young people. So many things can be done but resources are lacking. My vision is that the church would be truly grounded in the word and live in close fellowship with Lord. I hope that we will be able to establish a strong discipleship program among the youth. The church needs to be more sensitive to the needs of today's youth and be willing to make radical change in their program and activities to accommodate the youth culture. Although adults are often resistant to abrupt changes, our youth are keen for change. The church needs to really rethink and find possible ways in reaching the youth of today for the Lord.

6. Conclusion and Challenge – A Call to the Church

We have considered the commission of Jesus Christ to go out and reach all people groups with the gospel. We have seen how that is to spelled out as we seek to reach the youth generation.

We have looked closely at the needs of young people around the world both globally and regionally and also through the magnifying glass of specific local case studies and perspectives.

In concluding, we suggest to churches everywhere, to pastors, elders, leaders, youth ministers and all who feel the Lord's call on their life, to consider the following conclusions which we consider combine to form an **urgent call to the church.**

A Call to the Church

As we seek to reach the emerging generation of young people around the world, we consider that Jesus is calling the church around the world to:

1. Embrace the importance of reaching and influencing youth with the gospel of Jesus Christ

Reaching young people can only happen holistically. Jesus is our model and teacher. The whole gospel can bring whole healing to the millions and millions of young people within and outside of the church today. We need a new passion and urgency to understand that the time to act is now. We need to partner in prayer and concerted action, we need to train, send out and support young ambassadors for Christ to reach this generation. The task before us is clear. We need the full empowerment of the Holy Spirit for it. Young people are today's harvest field as well as tomorrow's, today's church as well as tomorrow's.

2. Establish relationships as the core of all ministry and outreach to youth

The great needs of young people span the entire spectrum of human neediness. The need for relationship is central for all and needs to be understood as such. Relevant relationships, lived out in authentic and tangible community are the foundation stones for all true and effective ministry. Building relationships with young people demands time and real interested, steadfastness and a servant attitude. At the same time there is the need for boldness and spiritual authority which stem from a reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, a renewed trust in God's word and the power of the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of the church

3. Engage with the real needs of young people in culturally relevant ways

To reach the young generation with the liberating news of Jesus Christ, we need to go beyond our comfort zones to meet them where they are and accept them as they are. We need to understand deeply all issues related to the real needs of young people and to seek to develop answers that are relevant both culturally and spiritually. Mission to young people is in many cases a cross-cultural venture and must be undertaken in the spirit of humility, teachability and sensibility which characterize every true service in the name of Jesus, who took on a servant's form for our sake. At the same time we must be bold to engage the powers of darkness that try to destroy God's purposes for the young generation. Mission to young people remains under the promise which Jesus made to his followers: "I am with you always until the ends of the earth."

We want to listen to, heed and act upon that which we believe the Lord Jesus Christ is calling us all today. The 12/25 challenge is ever before us. Let us, therefore, together:

- Embrace the importance of reaching and influencing youth with the gospel of Jesus Christ

- Establish relationships as the core of all ministry and outreach to youth

- Engage with the real needs of young people in culturally relevant ways

So that the whole world – including today's and tomorrow's young generations – may be reached with the whole gospel by the whole church.

In Pattaya 2004, in our issue group entitled "Reaching the Youth Generation", the Lord encouraged us to pray and then to act as an answer to this call. He has given us ***A New Heart. A New Passion. and a Renewed Call***.

Appendix 1

Statement from the Salvation Army Focus Group on Reaching Youth

Introduction

As part of the global enquiry that has been conducted in preparation for Lausanne 2004, The Salvation Army constituted small groups focussing on each of the issues listed for consideration at the Forum. It was our hope that not only would this help focus Salvation Army attention on these issues, but also that our perspectives might be welcomed as a contribution to the process. For that reason the groups were asked to engage in e-mail dialogue and to prepare a short statement which could be forwarded to the issue group. The process was announced on the Salvation Army website and contributions were invited. We are pleased to forward to you the statement from The Salvation Army group on the issue: **Reaching Youth**, conveying, as it does, the views of a representative group of committed Salvationists.

Statement from the Salvation Army Focus Group on Reaching Youth

There is no easy answer, programme or 'guest speaker' that has the answer to the challenges of reaching, capturing and enabling youth in the battle of the church today. Alvin Toffler made this statement: "The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."

Isaiah the prophet recorded for us the wise words and promise of God: '*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*' (Isaiah 43:18-19)

We believe the call to the worldwide Salvation Army, at this stage, is a three layered and yet integrated, relational approach. We need to reach, evangelize and disciple (code RED).

Reach

A call to learn a 'new thing'. A call to redefine the purpose of our programmes, our ministry and our passion. We exist to 'save souls' which for 'today' requires that we need to meet those 'souls' where they are and with an understanding of who they are. Judgment, and an in your face 'turn or burn' approach, needs to be replaced by an invitational and relational church model that says 'you are important, you are not a programme or a statistic, but a newly discovered friend'. For some churches this may require a move to come alongside the world of hi-tech, vibrant music, video and arts.

Evangelize

A call to unlearn the 'old way' of open-airs, surveys and tracts. A call to build a long-term genuine relationship that allows God to 'convert / save' the soul. A purposeful and passionate style of approach, that underlines the fact that the person is important and loved, not just a result or a number.

Discipleship

A process that has to be continually re-learnt. To disciple implies that we move a person along in their knowledge and acceptance of God's will for their life. To 'move' a person along also requires that we know where that person is at any given stage – that we understand the doubts, the questions and the fears that most young people feel a 'Jesus' relationship carries with it. The Bible warns us of a time when the word will be used just to 'tickle the ears' of those who are listening. Many young people are seeing the church of today and its message, as having little link to their 'modern' ways of thinking and powerful pressures. Their cries may be heard, but there is an expectation for them to bring their cries to the church instead of the church opening its doors, its thinking and its programmes to the 'cries' first. The message of grace is relevant and important, but most youth are looking for the message of grace coupled with the hard truth.

Finally, the youth of today are searching for those who would be true to the words they share – would model lives of purity, joy and right choices - so that they can see and believe it can be done.

'Reaching Youth' is an almost impossible task unless – we believe – it is handled by the whole church with dedicated champions, gifted in the area of relationships and servanthood, who are 'in the world' and understand its new complexities and challenges and yet 'not of the world', so that they can share the prospect of an old yet new, narrow way.

Appendix 2

An In-Depth Analysis of the Culture and Challenge of Youth in America

There is definitely a specific youth culture in America. In fact, there is both a generalized youth culture (hereafter called "Mainstream") and a good number of youth subcultures within the Mainstream. The Mainstream youth culture has been created in large part by the media-consumer machine that exerts tremendous implicit and explicit control over young people. The media dictates the interests of young people and shapes the values of young people – primarily as a means of accessing the money of young people.

One hundred percent of the youth in America are affected by the Mainstream youth culture. Even youth subcultures, which are often born as an act of rebellion to the Mainstream, are usually subsumed by it and become new facets of that Mainstream. The interdependence of the Mainstream and its various subcultures can be demonstrated by the fact that the youth who survives best (socially) in America is one who can communicate well with all the various subculture groupings within his/her school or area.

The description of the Mainstream that follows is somewhat simplified in order to aid in understanding this exceedingly intricate cultural complex. Some distinguishing marks of the Mainstream include physical dress/appearance, music, media and slang.

Dress/appearance

Female youth tend to dress more provocatively than female adults, with the exposure of the midriff being one prominent recent trend. This trend has even led some sociologists to refer to the stereotypical female youth by the title "Midriff." This trend probably reflects the general tendency among young females to equate their value and worth with their physical appearance. This obsession with the physical also leads a large number of young people to engage in self-destructive behaviour and develop eating disorders. Male youth also dress in fashions that are significantly distinct from adult fashions. These vary across youth subcultures, with some elements such as baggy jeans, baseball hats and clothing with sports logos being quite common.

Music

Music is an extremely important element of American youth culture. The cable network MTV (Music Television) caters almost exclusively to youth and in many cases actually contributes to the genesis of new trends within youth culture. Young people in America love music and music videos. Almost every young person owns a personal "walkman" that he/she uses to listen to music. An emerging product is the portable MP3 player, which allows the user to store thousands of songs in a device the size of a small wallet. American young people spend millions of dollars on music and music-related products each year. Styles of music that are popular among youth abound and in many cases, a particular style is a primary defining element of a particular youth subculture (i.e. Punk, Rap, Grunge). The multi-faceted nature of the Mainstream is clearly demonstrated by the diversity of musical styles represented in the five top-selling albums of 2003. The best-selling album was by rap artist "50 Cent," followed by the pop star Norah Jones, the hard rock group "Linkin Park," Goth rockers "Evanescence," and Hip hop/rap group "Outkast."

Media

The effects of media have already been alluded to. In America, the media is one of the principal originators of youth culture. The Frontline program entitled "The Merchants of Cool" (produced by PBS in 2000) is a particularly helpful record of this. This program points out how media is used as a tool by various consumer industries to manipulate youth and youth culture as a means of selling products. Besides music, youth culture in America is also obsessed with television media, video games and magazines. While media is especially pervasive in youth culture, it also exerts significant control on American adult culture.

Slang

Mainstream youth culture, like many cultures, is partially distinguished by language. Young people have entire vocabularies of slang that are virtually undecipherable to adults.

American Youth Subcultures

There are a plethora of youth subcultures in America that are subsets of the Mainstream (some are more peripheral than others). A list of a few such subcultures follows. This list includes the names of some subcultures, their distinguishing marks, and the "attractors" that draw young people to particular subculture groups.

Subculture	Distinguishing marks	Attractors
Punk	music, fashion, nihilism	non-conformists, resistance to the rules of the Mainstream
Hip Hop / Rap	music, dance, gang-like groupings, fashion	reaction to the racist and oppressive influences of society, expression of worth / value
Jock	sports, fashion	the "heroes" and "idols" of the Mainstream
Goth	fashion, other-worldly spirituality, music	introspection and melancholy, non-conformity and resistance to the Mainstream
The "new" Hippies	music, fashion, social concern	preference for the natural, altruism, egalitarianism

Each of the subcultures mentioned above has a distinctive worldview.

* The **Punk** subculture is one made up of nihilistic non-conformists. They "have renounced the bourgeois world in order to instruct the rest of us in the deceptions of desire and the illusory nature of the material world" (Tittley). They do not rebel only for the sake of rebellion. Rather, they do so in order to point out to the surrounding culture how imprisoned they are by the rules and norms of society.

* The **Hip Hop / Rap** subculture is led by members of the gang culture. They play out violence in their behaviour as a means of anticipating the stereotype that has been assigned to them by the racist Mainstream. The Mainstream thinks of them as "thugs," so they capitalize on that stereotype and elevate it to an art form. "They cultivate the pre-emptive visual strike, the show of gang menace, the declaration of a toughness" (Tittley). This is clearly a response to the injustice that has been dealt them and their families by history. Hip Hop / Rap music groups are almost always at the top of the music charts, demonstrating the great influence they have upon the Mainstream.

* The **Jock** subculture is an elite subset of the Mainstream. For Jocks, life revolves around success in athletics and social popularity. Jocks are seen (often unfairly) as relatively unintelligent and simple-minded. The physical is extremely important to them. They try to value their physical bodies through discipline in exercise, but many of their recreational activities involve unhealthy behaviour, such as drug/alcohol abuse and indiscriminate sex.

* The **Goth** subculture is distinctive in its darkness. It is deeply spiritual, but the spiritual forces summoned are those of vampires and forces related to death. They have a well-developed other-worldly cosmology. Goths are obsessed with their own melancholy. A well-known Goth icon is the singer Marilyn Manson and the Goth-rock group "Evanescence" has recently gained much popularity, staying near the top of the music charts. The prominence of a musical group from such a recently developed subculture highlights the accelerating trend of fragmenting/ faceting within the Mainstream.

* The **"new" Hippies**, closely related to the grunge subculture, are, like the Hippies of the 1960's, concerned with equality and a return to all things natural. They are champions of the environment and support ecological movements. They are generally altruistic and generous. Some are seen as selfish, but they would contend that they are simply including themselves

within the scope of their own altruism.   The new Hippies would also tend to engage in some illicit drug use, but, unlike the Jocks, they have a philosophy motivating this behaviour.

Dimensions of Youth Culture

The inner dimension of American youth culture reflects American adult culture in its extreme emphasis on individualism and independence.   Youth are seeking to distinguish themselves and establish their individual identities.   Ironically, they are profoundly influenced by peer pressure, even as they seek to define themselves as unique.   As noted above, each youth subculture has its own specific interests and inner drives, ranging from the reaction to racism in the case of Hip Hop / Rap culture, to a drive for egalitarianism in the case of the new Hippies.

All members and subsets of youth culture are profoundly influenced by the consumerism that dominates the lifestyle of Americans.   Consumerism has actually become a primary factor in identity formation.   More and more, young people find identity not in who they are, but in what they buy or consume.   Thus, in many cases, the outward marks and attributes of American youth culture directly determine its inner dimension.

The youth of America have many questions about life, but all of these boil down to the primary issue of a search for value, worth and (to a lesser extent) purpose.   Will I have a good life? Will I find a husband or wife? Am I lovable? Will I make a lot of money? Will I be happy? Will I be lonely? All of these questions can be traced back to a desire for worth and value. Will I make a difference in this world? Why am I here? Does anybody care that I am here? All of these questions point to a desire for purpose.

The gospel and youth culture

The fact that youth ask questions about worth, value and purpose throughout their adolescence makes this a prime time to share with them the gospel.   The gospel is truly "good news" to young people – because it shows them that they were created by a God who loves them (even enough to die for them) and they, therefore, have tremendous worth and value.   Additionally, the gospel's mandate to activism (love one's neighbour, take the gospel to the ends of the earth, etc.) involves youth in God's work in the world, giving their lives significant and eternal purpose.

The Reality of Life for the Young Generation

The rising divorce rate in America in recent decades has shattered the security of the nuclear family system.   Many youth have been deprived of adequate love and nurture and are, therefore, extremely susceptible to the fear of rejection and abandonment.   They have known few (if any) persons who are stable, reliable, loving influences.   Some youth believe that these types of people do not even exist.

The decline of moral values has moved to the forefront of the public eye through media scandals such as the OJ Simpson trial and the Clinton/Lewinsky affair. Homosexuality has also come to be seen as an acceptable, rather than an abnormal lifestyle in recent years.   Thus, what was formerly seen as immoral (and what is seen as immoral by the Scripture) has now become normal in American society.   Youth believe that people can commit murder and adultery without consequence, so long as they are not caught.   There is not a higher moral-ethical standard to which we ought to conform.   For youth, this is not how the world has become, it is just how the world is.   They don't remember anything different.

The youth of the current generation have also grown up in a time when the fear of sudden and catastrophic violence is palpable.   The Columbine High School massacre of 1999, as well as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, have undermined America's previous imagined insulation.   "Homeland security" is a phrase that reflects an illusory hope rather than a reality.   Neither public buildings nor government compounds nor local high schools are safe.   This has resulted in a significant pessimism among youth regarding the future.   An undercurrent of anxiety in the larger culture has no small effect on the youth generation.

Finally, the advent and popularization of the internet is completely unique to the emerging youth generation.   The internet has allowed young people to access much that is good and much that is not so good.   On the positive side, the internet has allowed American

youth to widen their horizons by facilitating communication with friends beyond their own small geographic circles. It has also allowed them access to research and information sources for education. Yet the internet has also facilitated their access to pornography, terrorist groups (grass roots and otherwise) and a host of other frightening influences. Further, the internet has had a massive influence on youth in that it has allowed for the formation of new subgroups around any particular interest set. Thus, the internet has actually led to the multiplication of discrete youth subcultures.

The Break-down of Relationship

One-third of this generation has been murdered before they were even born. The legacy of legalized abortion in America has had a profound effect on the young people born since the mid-seventies. The wide acceptance of abortion has broadcast a message to youth that they are unwanted. This message of rejection has been subtle but highly effective. Further, youth in America are legally marginalized and sometimes the victims of outright discrimination.

Many youth have also fallen into the deconstructionist hermeneutic of relationships that exists in the prevailing culture. No one can be trusted, for anyone who takes an interest in another must be doing so out of selfish motivation. There is an underlying suspicion behind relationships that asks, "What do you really want from me?" This suspicion precludes the healthy friendship and community which the gospel promotes.

Finally, many young people have come to assume "victim" as their primary identity. While this is merited in many cases, because youth have indeed been subject to enormous wounding and pain, it is also dangerous. One who is accustomed to a culture of victimhood is not always eager to seek healing, restoration and health. Effective youth ministry ought to acknowledge young people's woundedness, offer them healing and counselling and help them to move forward in developing a positive identity beyond their victimhood.

Youth are profoundly insecure about their identity and self-worth. They fear rejection and abandonment. They also fear being unfulfilled in their adulthood, whether that is manifest in a lack of success, financial prosperity, love, happiness, or purpose.

A Christian hard rock group called "P.O.D." released a song entitled "Youth of the Nation" a few years ago, which made it to the top of the secular charts. This song depicted the plight of American youth through three short examples: the young victim and perpetrator of a school shooting; a young woman who allows herself to be sexually misused in order to feel valued; and a suicidal young man. This song's popularity is undoubtedly connected to its accurate discernment of the sinister spirit of the age for this generation of American young people.

A substantial number of American youth believe in the proverbial "American Dream" of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but a growing number of youth actually suffer from a lack of hopes and dreams. They live in the present, because recent history (9/11, terrorism, etc.) seems to point toward a dark future. The popular singer Dave Matthews paraphrased Ecclesiastes 8:15 in a recent song, to point to the prevailing worldview of consumerist America: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

The Church and the Young Generation

Churches in mainline denominations are responding rather poorly to the youth generation (with a few exceptions). The majority of churches do not have a youth ministry budget or a dedicated youth ministry staff person. Even fewer churches have viable ministries to college-aged young people and young adults in their twenties. A fundamental flaw in most church youth ministry is the lack of value placed on outreach. Even churches that do have youth ministry programs are not usually engaged in significant outreach to unsaved youth, nor do they wish to be. They want their youth program to function mainly as a chaplaincy for the children of church members. These youth ministries are dedicated to maintenance, not mission.

There are many specialized ministries targeting young people in America. There is *Rock the World Youth Mission Alliance*. Another parachurch ministry is *Young Life*. It evangelizes young people by sending adult workers into high schools to build caring relationships with youth. *Youth with a Mission* is an international ministry that trains young

people to be disciples who will share the gospel with their peers and among the nations. A newer ministry, the *International House of Prayer*, trains young people to intercede for the work of the gospel in the world through a school of ministry and a 24/7 prayer room. Multitudes of other specialized youth ministries exist. The strongest of these ministries are based on relational principles. That is, they seek to build relationships with young people by approaching them on their own "turf" and engaging them at their point of interest and/or need.

Youth Ministry as Cross-Cultural Mission

Since youth culture is clearly distinct from adult culture, youth ministry is actually a missionary endeavour. Youth missionaries, like all missionaries, must always seek to contextualize the gospel message in a way that it can be understood and received. The primary method of contextualizing the gospel for young people is through personal relationships. Youth are hungry for friends and mentors who will affirm their value and worth and help them form their identity. Thus, relational ministry is a particularly important method for youth workers. Youth ministry is not simply about designing the most interesting and dynamic program or service. It is about pouring one's life into a young person, showing them the love of Christ through authentic personal relationships and helping those who respond to the gospel reach out to their peers.

Contextualization as a ministry strategy was modelled for us by Jesus as he "*became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood*" (John 1:14, The Message). Jesus also focused on relational ministry as a primary strategy. He did not train His disciples in a vacuum, but through intense loving personal relationships. He continues to do so with us, His followers, today.

Essentials for holistic ministry among youth

Several things are important for ministry among youth. First, a basic understanding of adolescent development helps youth ministers to know how best to communicate with youth at various ages and stages. Secondly, a basic familiarity with the interests, behaviour patterns, values, language, and artefacts of the minister's target subculture will help the minister to know how to communicate with the young people and pursue them through relational ministry. Finally, a love for God and a love for young people (as well as what young people do) are crucial.

"Rock the World Youth Mission Alliance" has developed a small group evangelistic method for young people, dubbed "Contagion Groups." These Bible Study guides allow young people anywhere, with little or no training, to begin meeting in groups to fellowship, study Scripture and invite non-believing peers into an experience of Christian community. They are called Contagion Groups because the simplicity of the method facilitates the quick and contagious spread of the gospel. Youth who use Contagion Groups will not be bottle-necked in their evangelism by requirements for specialized materials or training. All that young people need to lead a Contagion group is a heart for Jesus, a Bible and a place to meet with friends!

Another youth-friendly format for worship that was recently developed is called "The Digital House of God." These worship services seek to incorporate multi-sensory activities, music, video and technology to explore God and faith. Because these worship services use media that is friendly to the youth culture and honestly engages the questions of youth, it functions evangelistically. "The Digital House of God" piques the interest of non-believing young people and draws them in to explore God and the nature of faith in Christ.

My ultimate vision for the future church can be found in Revelation 7:9-12. Thinking on a shorter-term scale, I pray that the church will be the truly biblical gathering of God's people rather than seen as an institution. For too long, church has been defined by a set of walls, or a set of programs, or a set of traditions. The biblical understanding of *church* is that it is people who are called of Christ to be His people and thus His witnesses to the world (*the body of Christ*).

A Model of Church for the Young Generation

I see a thriving church as a network of thousands of small house churches throughout a city, who worship, fellowship and serve within their homes and communities at least weekly – and meet on a semi-regular basis (monthly, perhaps) for city-wide worship. In each city, there would also exist a House of Prayer, where believers from all over the city could go at any time throughout the day and night, 7-days-a-week – to pray, worship and be refreshed. Such a House of Prayer would also be a coalescing agent for the house churches across the city, as it facilitates cooperation among all believers to pray in unity for the outworking of God's purposes in that region.

Young People as Inculturated Witnesses for Christ

The church must begin to see youth not only as recipients of ministry but also as agents of ministry. Jesus did not commission us to make converts, but disciples. Thus, our goal is not just to evangelize youth, but also to equip them and send them out as "indigenous" evangelists to their peers. The existence of a global youth culture means that youth across the world share a common base of knowledge of music and media, clothes and other artefacts, values, ideas, behaviour and even elements of language. In more and more instances, any given young person might have more in common with another youth across the globe than they have in common with an elderly person who lives a few blocks away. So who is best equipped as an indigenous evangelist to unreached youth? A Christian youth, of course. The most strategic thing the church can do to reach the youth generation is to equip those who already believe as youth-evangelists who can start a chain-reaction of evangelism among their peers!

(Prepared by Meredith Borel, slightly edited by Roland Werner)

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