

## EVANGELIZATION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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I deeply appreciate the organizers of the Congress setting apart some time in the program to consider the subject of evangelization among secondary school students. No one can deny the fact that laying a spiritual foundation in the lives of young people while they are going through secondary education is of utmost importance. To a large extent, many of the problems we are facing among university students would be solved if proper and effective evangelization was being carried out at the secondary schools. The future leaders of our world would be better leaders if they could be reached for Jesus Christ during their secondary education.

We are living in an age when evangelization among secondary schools is greatly diminished, due to the secularization of governments which eventually prohibit religious teaching and activities in the schools as part of the curriculum. This has partly resulted in a generation of teens who have become a problem to society. While enormous strides have been taken to strengthen the physical, mental and social needs of the students, the spiritual need has been greatly and — in the majority of cases — totally neglected. But in the midst of this situation there has never been a generation of young people more open to first-century Christianity than this present questioning generation.

True their minds have been denuded of heroes by the all-prying press, "But, the rugged Christ of the first century who says, 'Follow me,' is more attractive to youth than he has ever been," said Rev. Jay Kesier, President, Youth for Christ International, U.S.A. If this had not been true, many of us who have been working among them would have been wiped off the scene by the overwhelming changes that are occurring today.

### *Today's generation of teens*

Today's teens constitute a large proportion of the world's population. They are not only an increasing generation but also a changing generation. They are becoming taller in height, bigger in size and even faster in movement. Besides this, they learn more, buy more, travel more, and see more than we did twenty to twenty-five years ago.

The teens of today get into more sex problems, break the laws of the country and educational situations so much that one can hardly skim through a daily newspaper without reading about some disturbances and chaos created by teenagers.

What are these students before the eyes of the world, and in our eyes? "Just children" to the parents; "a menace" to the police; "weapons

to be used to an end" to the Communist; "a market" to the businessman; "the unreachable" to the church; but to themselves they are "adults."

Dr. Billy Graham says, "The young person is one who is in the most difficult period of his entire life, living in a world of his own and making decisions that will determine his life in twenty years...."

The situation of the teenagers in the U.S.A. is a good example of today's generation.

"There are now 30 million teenagers more than in 1947. Since 1955, over a million teenagers have been added to the U.S. population each year. *Look* magazine reported in 1967, "The tape measure and the scales prove that they are bigger and a stop watch will show they are faster. Any parent can tell you that they are smarter or at least savvier. The F.B.I. can prove they are more lawless; most churchmen will agree they are more sceptical. This year some 29 million teenagers will spend up to 20 billion dollars on products ranging from surf-boards to false eyelashes. Teen boys will purchase 40 per cent of all men's slacks, and one-third of all men's sweaters. Fourteen-year-old girls will buy cosmetics their mothers could not have afforded even if they had been on the counters in 1944. Fellows and girls will jet at youth fares further in one year than their grandfathers traveled in their lifetime. Via TV they will watch courses in seduction in full color in their living rooms that could not have been seen in theaters twenty-five years ago. Unmarried girls will have twice as many illegitimate babies as those of twenty years ago. In school they will yell words and phrases across the lunchroom tables that their parents did not understand until after marriage. Almost half of the graduating class will go on to college compared with one-fourth that went on twenty years ago...." *James Hefley.*

This is becoming more and more prevalent not only in the affluent modern Western world but also in the fast-developing Eastern world.

In India, right now, 79 million students study in secondary schools. Writing about the situation of education in India, one author said, "What India is trying today, is to harmonize her old values with the values of the modern world. The old values are spirituality, toleration, and universalism under vague concepts like 'Dharma,' under more specific concepts like the family, marriage, religious and caste practices. And when they try to harmonize these old values with the values of the modern world they have created a great confusion in the minds of the young people. The average teenager today in the East, is terribly confused between the old values of their own cultures and traditions and the values of the modern world that are sweeping all over the world."

At one of the large youth congresses held in India, during the Question Hour, one of the students sent in the following question, "Is it right to go steady with a girl while in high school?" The note was anonymous and the writer had spelled the word "right" as "wright." So, I had to say, the person who wrote this question should first know how to spell "right" right before he begins to start going steady, and concluded by explaining that it was necessary for him to become a mature person before involving himself in making a mature decision of this nature. This is an illustration of the young person's confusion which he faces in the East, because of the Western influence relating to sex.

Describing the confusion of the young person on the American Continent, Barry Moore wrote, "61 per cent of America's young people experiment in drinking, sex and drugs, because of natural inbred curiosity, the continuous brainwashing of the advertising media, and the absolute lack of parental guidance." They experience severe social and academic pressures. The Director of Psychiatry of the University of Wisconsin wrote a book entitled, *The Roots of Student Despair* and said that as many as 800 students a year look for psychiatric help because of intense frustrations. Shaky world conditions, unstable family foundations, stringent educational demands, pressure to conform to teenage society, and the failure in "living it up" do anything but deeply satisfy, have left them with strain and anxiety. Dropping out from society is a form of "escapism." Some have disengaged in this way, because they have felt that there were better things in life. "But," says *Weekend* magazine, "when you ask what they intend to do to obtain these better things they retort with empty phrases, and no concrete suggestions." Others used this drop-out idea to run away from discipline, propriety, purity, and as a means of having one's own way. "When our society has so much to offer, why are they missing the chance to seize their opportunities? Why are they experimenting, becoming frustrated, and seeking escape? The answer is, our American young people all over are overwhelmingly confused."

#### *The answer to this confused generation*

The answer to the search of this confused generation is Jesus Christ. Let me make it clear that it is not tradition-bound Christianity but it is Jesus Christ. Dr. Kenneth Keniston, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine said in a report, "Many of the traditional avenues to meaning and significance have dried up." Traditional religious faith is not for most sophisticated undergraduates. "As a means of ascertaining the meaning of life traditional religions often seem to the students to be worn out, insincere or superficial. Similarly, the great classic, political, liberalism, conservatism, Marxism or Fascism, arouse relatively little interest among most undergraduates. One by one, then, many of the traditional sources of meaning have disappeared, at the very same time that academic life itself, because of its intense pressure and professional specialization, seems to many students increasingly irrelevant to their major existential concerns." Very often we find teenagers raising the banner: "CHRISTIANITY — NO! JESUS CHRIST — YES!" This shows that young people in the schools are looking for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which alone can satisfy their spiritual need. A young drug addict said this in his testimony, "I do know this. I'm through with drugs for several reasons, the most important of which is, I have found more lasting satisfaction in a relationship with the Lord than any drug has ever offered."

In the early adolescent years, a high school student has a genuine need for a settled belief about nature and God, and this is why some psychologists say a religious conversion is distinctly an adolescent phenomenon. When Christ is presented as the Savior, as the Lord of his life, with all his demands of discipleship, the young high school student

responds to it and accepts Christ as his own Savior and decides to follow him. So, our message is clear. It is the fact that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes.

#### *The understanding of youth*

Any effort to evangelize a high school student should start with an effort to, first of all, understand him. We must understand his cultural, religious, social and mental background to the present time. The background changes from country to country and varies even within a country from state to state. This is one of the problems we have in a country like India with so many different religious practices and languages. One has also to remember that the religious interpretations of today are very different from those of thirty years ago. The needs are similar in other Asian countries too. We must project ourselves into adolescent life and understand some of the pressures that are molding his attitudes and responses today. Many of the students have feelings of distress, despondency, anxiety, and a sense of incompleteness, a fear of eternal punishment, morbid conscientiousness, and struggles against sex interest. Adolescents often suffer over the problem of death. A sixteen-year-old girl wrote, "The more I read about the splendor of life, the more I see its tragedy, the fleetingness of time, the ugliness of age, the certainty of death; the inevitable is always on my mind. Time is my slow executioner. When I see a large crowd on the beach, or at a ball game, I think to myself, who among them is going to die first? And who last? How many of them will be here next year? Five years from now? Ten years from now? I feel like crying out, 'How can you enjoy life when you know death is around the corner?'"

Such thoughts often tend to produce depression, brooding, and constant introspection. Doubts begin to increase as they see the conflict due to the opposing factors in the school and the world and probably in the churches. Very often doubts tend to end in painful mental conflicts. As they go through these conflicts, we find that they do make some adjustments. Some place implicit belief in the traditional religion. They find security in the community that believes the same things. But there are many others who gradually work out a personal religion; and there is a small minority who are able to adopt as a permanent adjustment the attitude of suspended judgment, resting in the conclusion that they do not know the explanation of the universe or the meaning of life or God. But the unknowable is, however, likely to be extremely painful, especially for the intelligent but emotionally immature youth.

While the basic spiritual nature of a secondary schooler is unchanging, his way of thinking and his emotional responses have changed. Hence the evangelist, concerned in order to show the student the way through to repentance and faith in Christ Jesus, should know him — not merely be acquainted with him. The student's needs, concerns, ideals, etc., should be known. Then the confidence of the student will be won and a genuine relationship in a relevant way can be built.

In our approach to the secondary school students, we need to keep in mind the fact that needs vary from person to person and the secondary

schooler has his load of needs, such as the need to be loved, accepted, secure, honest, spiritual, and successful.

### *The need to be accepted*

In a world that is rapidly advancing materially, scientifically, and technologically, the danger of reducing people to mere numbers is great. Hence the need for acceptance. One of the secondary schooler's greatest fears is to be rejected by his friends and associates. Because of this, he is willing to go with the crowd and do what the crowd does even when he knows that what the crowd is doing is not right. He finds his greatest self-esteem and stability not in what he is doing, but with whom he is doing it. He feels he is needed and accepted within the group, and this results in many strong gangs or cliques being formed, usually of the same sex.

### *The need to be secure*

Our world is insecure. We live under the shadow of the atom and hydrogen bomb, as well as more sophisticated weapons of war that have made the total annihilation of our world an uncomfortable possibility. Furthermore, the rapid progress of many developing countries in Asia, with the coming of industrialization has demanded mobility, and mobility prevents the establishment of permanent roots in society. Parents are all too often busy, and in order to keep the home fires burning have resorted to both husband and wife seeking employment. In today's progressive India, the traditional Indian woman who was always home-bound is now fully occupied with jobs outside the home in both private and governmental concerns thus having little or no time to spend at home with the growing secondary schooler. They fail to help him as he makes the most major decisions in his life.

### *The need to be honest*

Because of insecurity and the contradictions of the adult world that he sees, saying one thing and doing another, he demands logical reasons for his expected behavior, and rebels against any hypocrisy. He wants answers that are frank — the "straight from the shoulder" variety, and would rather you would not answer his many questions than to give him an evasive or vague answer.

### *The need to be loved*

This is a basic need that remains from birth, and the fulfilling of it largely depends upon the home background. When a secondary schooler has been starved of parental love, he soon begins to confuse sex gratification with love, and love with sex. Thus many a maladjusted young person's problems can be traced back to his home.

### *The need to be successful*

Our world in its eagerness for progress has confused material affluence, fame, and success with happiness. This is so much so that in Asian countries, parents often determine the vocation of their children, telling them to become a doctor or an engineer and that failure to do so would mean disaster. All this confuses a young person about what he

wants out of life. In a recent survey it was estimated that forty percent of teens feel that they will be "failures." They are thus in need of guidance and help to see realistic goals for their lives.

### *The need to be spiritual*

This is the age in life when the secondary schooler wants a flag to follow, a creed to believe in, and a cause to serve. An age when he is in need of a faith that can stand the test of life. These are some of the most fertile years for spiritual growth, though he would rarely show it outwardly. He is not interested in a faith for himself alone, but in his boundless enthusiasm he is looking for something that can remake his world and be applicable to his generation. Many of the educationists in East and West were very quick to realize that the lack of morality was appalling when religious instruction was left out of the school curriculum. So they substituted moral instruction. While many students may believe in the moral standards, they realize the lack of power to achieve that standard by themselves.

Ultimately he wants a freedom that comes from within, a freedom that delivers him from the bondage and tyranny of sin, and a freedom made possible on the Cross that brings him the knowledge of sins forgiven and peace between him and God.

### *Communication*

a. *The message.* One of the continual problems we face in our ministry is, "What shall I communicate to the teenager?" One should keep in mind that there are basically two things to be presented in relation to evangelism:

(i) The plan of salvation in such a simple way that any teenager without Christ might find him.

(ii) A message that will challenge, inspire and motivate the Christian teen to live a Christ-like life. I do not wish to spend much time arguing that the presentation of Jesus Christ is the message. I firmly believe that the unchanging Christ is the need of the teenager in a changing world.

b. *The method.* It is very important to consider the way the message is to be proclaimed. Young people are not satisfied with "pat answers" any more. They want something that will meet the need that they have. Many of the phrases and terms that are used in sermons are strange words to the teens. We must present a message that makes sense to the teen who is not familiar with theology. So we need to work on sermons, Bible study notes and literature for the secondary schooler so that the way they are presented makes sense. This involves a study of the terms that they understand. A specialized research in communicating to the young person is involved. If the presentation of the message is too intellectual, and they do not have enough knowledge to understand all that is said, it goes above their heads. I have never forgotten a statement which Dr. Billy Graham made when he visited India in 1956. He said, "Men know a lot about science, psychology, etc., but very little about religion. The average religious knowledge of a man is that of a 13-year-old boy. Therefore, I preach as if I am preaching to a 13-year-old boy..." If he made this statement referring to the adults, one realizes how important it is for us to be clear in our communication to teenagers.

On the other hand, if it is too simple, they begin to think that it is not practical or relevant. Hence we need to find a balance of presentation that meets the intellectual needs of the young person and at the same time appeals to his emotions and to his world, so that he is convinced of the truth of the message. May I at this point caution the Western evangelist, who thinks the Asian teenager readily says, "Yes" to the claims of Christ. The Asian teenager has no difficulty in accepting Jesus Christ as one of the Saviors of the world, but it is a different thing when he has to believe on him as the Savior.

c. *The messenger.* Let us consider the person who communicates the Gospel. A few years ago, young people used to run after the popular preachers. But the trend is changing. Now they listen to the man who is available to talk to them. So the person who communicates should be a person who is available to them to answer their questions and to help them in their practical needs. Therefore we must be physically, emotionally, and spiritually available to the teenagers if we hope to communicate with them.

Whenever we think of the qualified messenger we often have in mind adults such as the pastor, evangelist, Christian-school teacher or layman who is interested in the work among teens, but we often forget a group that could be a real key in communicating to the teens. This group I wish to present to you are the Christian teenagers themselves who are readily available to them on the campus. I do not want in the least to undermine the thousands and thousands of those dedicated men and women, all over the world, who are doing their best in ministering to the teens through their churches and youth organizations. But we would be failing to tap a legion of resource personnel for communicating to teenagers if we did not give serious consideration to the Christian teenagers.

The church, therefore, must get involved in equipping and training the Christian teenagers which will enable them to attain spiritual maturity and also learn the many things that are involved in leadership, and in communicating their faith.

### *The responsibility of the church in training Christian teenagers*

The church therefore, must get involved in equipping and training the Christian teenagers which will enable them to attain spiritual maturity and also learn the many things that are involved in leadership, and in communicating their faith.

There are many Christian organizations involved in evangelism in the secondary schools which have their specialities and unique contributions to make. However, only the Church of Jesus Christ can meet the total needs of the modern teens. This applies both to the nominal teen and the delinquent teen. While the banner, "CHRISTIANITY — NO! JESUS CHRIST — YES!" raised by the teenagers is a challenge to the Church to wake up, this should not in any way give room for us to think that they should not be brought into the fellowship of the Church. Every worker whether he belongs to interdenominational, non-denominational organizations, or a church, should remember that the teenagers who are reached for Jesus Christ should be channeled into Bible believing and Christ-exalting churches. Therefore, the pastors have to play a

vital role in developing the Christian teens. While it is not easy for pastors to have the kind of relations they would like to have with the teenagers who come to their churches, there are many things that they can still do.

For example, the pastor should personally get acquainted with them by showing up at their functions, scheduling an instruction program in which they can get involved, taking a teen Sunday School class for one quarter per year, schedule a personal interview at least once a year with each teenager.

The pastor should make arrangements for young people to be used in the churches. Those who can sing or play musical instruments should be used in the church choir, in their own teen choir, and also opportunities must be given in the church programs to use their own special musical abilities, whether singing or playing an instrument. Pianists could be used in different parts of the Sunday School for the opening exercise.

May I suggest some ways of winning the non-Christian teens and using the Christian teenagers to communicate to other teenagers?

a. *Challenge teenagers.* To make his school campus his mission field but give him guidance. Very often young people get frustrated because they attempt to reach everybody and not reach any one. They will eliminate the frustrations if they concentrate their efforts on one person.

b. *Organize teen musical teams.* I have never known any better strategy that can be used to overcome the various barriers in reaching teenagers with the Gospel than that of using teen musical teams. Musical teams are able to gain entry into countries ruled by Hindus — like Nepal and Burma, which have totally closed the doors to foreign missionary activities, and share the Gospel without much difficulty. They are often warmly welcomed by Roman Catholic and Hindu heads of institutions.

c. *Conduct youth congresses.* These congresses give opportunity for young people to participate in musical talent contests, preaching contests, quiz contests, etc. Also, by conducting youth festivals and youth music festivals wherever we go, we find that when young people know that other young people will be present, they are there.

d. *Conduct youth camps.* Camps play a vital role in evangelizing teens, encouraging the Christian teens to witness to non-Christian teenagers.

e. *Conduct clubs in homes.* This has become more and more a necessity as government regulations in many countries do not permit religious activities in school campuses. Conducting clubs in homes has become more effective for evangelism among secondary schoolers. This makes it easier for teenagers of other faiths to come more freely than going into a church or a Christian religious instruction class in a school.

f. *Conduct evangelistic missions.* In many countries the door is still open for conducting missions in schools. The Scripture Union and Inter-School Christian Fellowship have experienced great blessings through such missions for many, many years. These missions could make use of the Christian teenagers to invite their non-Christian friends and be an influence and help to them.

g. *Conduct vacation Bible schools.* Conducting of vacation Bible schools during the days when the schools are on holiday is another pro-

gram that has been greatly used to bring teens to Christ. Here again, the Christian teenagers can help a lot in this program.

There are two international evangelical youth organizations that are actively engaged in the ministry of evangelism among secondary schools. In addition to this there are several other organizations and church groups that do an effective ministry among them in different parts of the world.

In closing, may I urge the leaders of all these organizations to learn from one another so that our strategy may become more effective. We desperately need to learn from one another's experiences and knowledge.

### *Conclusion*

The true test of our ministry of evangelism among secondary school students is the ability of the young person to say to us, "I understand what it is that you are saying." It is then up to him to make an evaluation of the message. His response will then be based upon his evaluation. Positive response will mean that the young people to whom we minister will have a faith of their own, created by our Lord Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, rather than one imposed upon them.

## EVANGELISM AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS STRATEGY GROUP REPORT

The paper prepared by J. Victor Managarom was presented to the group and briefly discussed. The spirit of the paper was accepted and the burden for this work was found to be the same for all regions represented. The specific needs, however, varied in the different countries.

There was, unfortunately, some confusion over consecutive attendance at this strategy session which meant that few delegates attended all three sessions, thus hindering a progressive discussion of the problems tackled.

During the second and third sessions the members divided into groups representing Africa, Asia, South America and North America, Europe, and Australia. The following problems and observations emerged regarding school work.

1. The importance of biblical teaching was stressed. This should appear regularly in the program of voluntary Christian societies and in the formal teaching of religion in school curriculum. Major doctrines should be taught but matters that could lead to division and were of secondary or of denominational significance should be avoided. If questioned on these issues, there should be a balanced and scriptural reply. Personal counseling would be preferable at this stage.

2. There is a widespread need for materials to be used in school evangelism. Books and other aids are needed by the teachers in presenting a true biblically-oriented program.

3. The Christian teacher is the key person in high school evangelism. Worldwide prayer ought to be devoted to raising up more dedicated Christian teachers. Young people must be challenged with the opportunities existing in education today.

4. Leadership training is a constant necessity. Teachers and student leaders want regular training to aid them in running high school Christian meetings. Bible study aids, program suggestions, etc., must be available to encourage Christian growth and maturity. Suitable staff (S.U., YFC, and other organizations) are needed to improve and lead meetings.

5. There is a need to communicate in the language of the high schoolers. The approach should not be so stereotyped and inflexible as to be ineffective and not speak to the real needs of youth. It was stressed that we should always speak of Christ and not merely of church. The established church is often a barrier to reaching youth and after Christ has been accepted there is sometimes a need to work out integrating youth into a church.

6. Problems do vary from region to region. In the east, for example, students are very interested and involved with politics whereas sex is the prevailing obsession in the west. Every effort must be made to answer their needs as they exist and not be content with telling simple Bible stories. The students must be made to think through their position with the Christian faith presented as a challenge for genuine understanding.

7. Many ideas were mentioned as to how this work could be improved but the overall feeling of "youth reaching youth" was thought to be