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Youth Supports

A resource to encourage and empower youth
leaders for the expansion of the Lord's kingdom.

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- Reclaiming the American Teenager
- **K-Scope!**

I long:

to belong...

to be taken
seriously...

to matter...

Reclaiming the American Teenager

A few weeks ago our youth leadership team attended "THE CORE", a one day *Youth Specialties* training conference held in the Seattle area. The emphasis of this year's training was titled, "Reclaiming the American Teenager." The subject of the conference peaked my interest and proved to be quite insightful and answered many of the questions that had been rattling around in my head over the past couple years.

Almost two years ago I came on staff at our church, Community of Christ at St. Luke's, to oversee Middle School Ministries. Prior to beginning this ministry, I was on staff with Young Life, working with unchurched high school students.

One of my thoughts as I took this new position was, "I wonder what it will be like working mainly with kids who have grown up in the church...and who have heard about Jesus as long as they can remember?" What I realized rather quickly was that church teens and unchurched teens have more similarities than differences. Both groups struggle with identity, have gone through divorce, have abandonment issues, deep hidden pain and anger.

The students in our youth group have heard growing up in Sunday school that Jesus loves them and died for their sins. Most, if asked by a youth leader, "Have you made a decision to follow Christ", would say "yes." The confusing part as I get to know these kids is that very little about their lives communicate what they say they believe. So what's the glitch?

Well, many teenagers feel abandoned, and according to what I learned at *Youth Specialties*, "THE CORE", they respond in one of four ways...

- They *create a world beneath*, a world where adults are not allowed to enter.
- They *create a second family*, "the only people who really know me are my friends".
- The *art of multiple living*, where kids actually create a separate "church life", a "home life", a "school life" etc., all very authentic and yet very contradictory...*scary*.
- A *new morality*, where teens make up their own set of "rules".

I long:

for a safe
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K-Scope!

(If you want an inside glimpse of what is truly the teenage world today, the movie *Thirteen*, in my opinion, is a sad but accurate depiction. I would recommend it for youth leaders, however, you may have to watch it over 4 or 5 segments in order to get through it, due to it's graphic content. **Disclaimer: I would not show this movie at Youth Group.**)

I also learned at "THE CORE" what the **six longings of today's kids are:**

I long... to *belong*.... to be *taken seriously*...to *matter*...for a *safe place*...to be *uniquely me*...to be *wanted*.

So what do we do about it? Well, first we must be committed as youth leaders to a healthy authenticity. How are we doing spiritually in our own walk with the Lord? Kids aren't dumb. They can sniff out a "phony" a mile away. Second, we must create a "sanctuary". In other words, our youth ministry must be a safe place. Third, we must pursue one kid at a time. Kids want to be known, and taken seriously...remember? Learn kids names and get to know who they are. Lastly, we can sit on the steps of the "world beneath". We aren't invited below, but we sure can support them at their activities; sporting events, plays, concerts, whatever. Kids need us to be their biggest fans.

Ephesians 2:4-10: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved...For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Here are some considerations for those of us called by God to love teenagers (paid or volunteer): Who is your Peter, James and John? Who has God called you to pour your life into on a consistent basis? If you don't know, are you willing to pray and ask him to show you? The best way we can show kids how they can live "life to the full" (John 10:10)...is as people of God's grace investing in their lives and inviting them into ours and the Lord's.

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Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

http://www.nowlems.org/educational_services/YouthSupports.aspx

Kaleidoscope - "It's Where You Belong!"

This year's K-Scope is scheduled for July 10-15 at the Christ Lutheran Retreat Center on the Olympic Peninsula near Belfair, Washington. This creative adventure in living the Christian community (Romans 12) is a six-day experience in spiritual growth for high school youth of the Northwest District. Contact Rev. John Schmidt at <KScopeNOW@cs.com> or at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington, (253)584-2565.

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