



A service of the
Northwest District
of the
Lutheran Church -
Missouri Synod

Youth Supports

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

August 2005 - Volume 6, Issue 8

- Not Really Worlds Apart!
- **K-Scope!**

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Not Really Worlds Apart!

Just about anyone who has ever had the opportunity to preach or teach from the Scriptures will agree that one of the hardest things to do is to come up with the proper application or applications of the text you are working with. Theologians sometimes like to talk in terms of “what it meant” vs. “what it means” or even more bluntly “what does it mean to me?” This difficulty comes about in part because the culture of the Bible is different from the culture of 21st century America.

While it can be helpful and informative to contrast our history and culture with the history and culture of the Bible, sometimes it is more significant to see the similarities between our history and culture and that of the Bible.

This is where an understanding of the biblical culture is significant for those who work with youth. It just so happens that there are some significant cultural similarities between the world of the New Testament and the world of High School, and these similarities can help our youth enter into the world of the Biblical text and better understand it. An appreciation of these cultural similarities can also help those who work with youth understand their youth.

Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey point out that while mainstream American adult culture is individualistic; the culture of the New Testament world was dyadic. A dyadic person is one whose identity must always be considered in relation to at least one other social unit like a family or some other group. A dyadic person's behavior was directly influenced by their group role and they were always aware of the relationship they shared with those around them. These relationships were defined horizontally (those sharing the same social status) and vertically (with others above or below in social rank). The dyadic person did not think so much in terms of “I” and “me” but more in terms of “we” and “they”.

This is probably nowhere better illustrated than in the parables found in the Gospel of Luke. In the parable of the Prodigal Son both sons reject their group identity in terms of family and try and establish identities with other groups. The younger son first with friends in a far off country, then as a worker feeding another

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man's pigs, and finally his intention is to return home so that he can be as a hired hand for his father. The first part of the parable concludes with the father restoring to him his identity as son publicly. The older son also rejects his identity as son refusing even to go into the party celebrating the return of his brother. The parable of the Good Samaritan is told in the midst of a conversation between Jesus and a lawyer in which the lawyer finds that the group that makes up his neighbors is much larger than he originally thought. Perhaps the best example is the story of the sinful woman forgiven found in Luke 7:36-50. Here Jesus uses a short parable to illustrate that Simon has not fulfilled his duties to the group as host. At the same time Jesus publicly restored the forgiven woman to her status as a member of the community.

What does this have to do with youth? The culture of High School is probably the closest that we in America come to a dyadic culture. High School identity is very much defined by what the group thinks. What you wear, the activities you participate in, even the people you talk to, are in part determined by the group you belong to. Some of our youth embrace the identities given them by the group while others struggle against them and wish for other identities. This gives our youth something in common with the people they meet in the pages of the bible, and it gives us an opportunity to tell them about their identity as redeemed children of God, their identity in Christ.

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Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

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

E-Newsletter
from Synod

E-Newsletter from Synod Board of Youth Ministry

The Board of Youth Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a monthly e-bulletin with youth ministry information. To subscribe to it, go to <http://www.lcms.org/enews/> and follow the directions.

Ideas for Your
Youth
Program?

Want Some Ideas for Your Youth Program?

The Board of Youth Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with a grant from Thrivent started a new electronic youth ministry resource available for free on the internet. Check out <www.youthsource.com/> The web page is not just for adults, but for youth too with a number of links to other great web sites. Pass it on to your own youth!

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