

How To Reach the Youth Culture?

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Question: How to reach the youth culture?

Steve: The student minister asked, how do we reach college students and these two extremes? And I'm sure the secret is there is no secret. It's the reality of the power of the Gospel and the reality and the power of the Person and work of Christ unleashed by His Spirit from the Scripture upon the lives of students. And the fact is, so many of these students are unconverted. And their parents are wanting them to come and they're not saved, so they don't have a new mind, they don't have a new heart. They have a heart of stone that's resistant to the things of God. Their eyes are blind. Their ears are deaf. So most churches just resort to a bowling alley or a concert or whatever just to entertain them.

And that's a very challenging position to be in, Mackie, because you get a mom and a dad saved and they come to church, but all their kids are not necessarily yet regenerate. And how you hold their attention, I think you just have to, by the grace of God, every time you are with them and you minister to them, again, I don't think there's any secret. I think you just have to have such a reality of the living Christ in your own life and in your teaching and in your preaching and in your love and your outreach to them, and pray that God in His sovereignty will lay hold of them and arrest their attention. But I just refuse to turn this into a glorified club. And I totally understand a neo-Puritanical - I'm interested in that, but they're not interested in that. And I understand that. I wasn't either when I was that age.

But I remember when I was in high school, I grew up in a liberal Methodist church. I never even heard a Bible message. My parents led me to Christ and I had enough there that I was saved, but I remember in high school going to certain ministries outside of my church, that when I saw and heard and felt the reality of what was going on in those circles, my heart was just drawn to that. I remember just meeting in living rooms like this and little parachurch ministry things. And it was so simple. Someone stood up and led us in singing, and there was a Bible message. And there were snacks afterwards in the kitchen. It was simple, but it was authentic. It was real.

I think that somewhere in that is the reality of first century Christianity. And it may not succeed. And I'll have to accept that. I can't adjust the course for this ship if people are not hopping on board, but I don't have a martyr's complex. I'm not trying to shrink this. I'm wanting to enlarge this. I have a positive approach, but it's just who we are and what we are and it's like there is no other play to call. I mean, either God's going to get them on board, or they're just not going to be on board, but we're not going to become a different ship and cater to this. I would try to get the parents involved. And I'm coming right back to you - I'd try to get the parents involved and have their emotional support - not just be dropping them here, but to reinforce what we're doing as best we can. But really, what works in big church is what works in little church just with some adapting. But that's a tough question. Everybody I think around the country is wrestling with that.

And yeah, there is this kind of new movement within reformed circles - the young, restless, and reformed and wanting to be salty and edgy and crass. I'm not going down that path. I think there is a standard of holiness and purity and integrity that we've got to maintain. And I'm not trying to be a shock jock with young people where I've got to shock them by my edginess to get them interested. The power is in the Gospel. It's in the message, not in the messenger.