Youth Evangelism, "Link2Llife," A Strategy To Reach Postmodern Youth In Germany And Switzerland

Stephan Sigg
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ABSTRACT

YOUTH EVANGELISM, "LINK2LIFE," A STRATEGY TO REACH POSTMODERN YOUTH IN GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND

by

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Title: YOUTH EVANGELISM, “LINK2LIFE,” A STRATEGY TO REACH POSTMODERN YOUTH IN GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND

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Date completed: September 2013

Problem

In terms of cross-cultural mission youth are the most crucial group of people to be reached with the Gospel. From a theological, a sociological as well as a psychological point of view adolescence can be seen as the most receptive phase of life regarding the adoption and integration of faith, a coherent value system and a meaningful life narrative. The process of individuation in the adolescent years offers the biggest potential for both conversion and apostasy. Despite a professionalized youth ministry youth evangelism has never been high on the missional agenda of the Christian Church.
Method

The youth ministries department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany and Switzerland initiated and conducted an international youth evangelism broadcast through satellite to reach postmodern youth within and outside the church with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the years 2002 and 2004.

Results

In 2002 as well as in 2004 about 200 local congregations and youth clubs in Germany and Switzerland were part of the Link2Life initiative. Link2Life reached not only churched youth with the biblical message of Jesus Christ but also to a high percentage their unchurched friends. The Link2Life evangelism increased the identification with the Gospel message and the Adventist church among young people and lead to an increased number of baptisms.

Conclusions

Link2Life was an effective approach in the context of event or mass evangelism and a rare example of a missional attempt of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Germany and Switzerland to reach young people. Youth evangelistic events need the systemic context of an intergenerational and authentic community of faith. Youth evangelism, however, calls for an incarnational and contextual approach that values authentic relationships.
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

YOUTH EVANGELISM, “LINK2LIFE,” A STRATEGY TO REACH
POSTMODERN YOUTH IN GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND

A Project Document
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Stephan Sigg
September 2013
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ................................................................. viii

Chapter
I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................... 1
   Statement ........................................................................................ 1
   Statement of the Task ....................................................................... 1
   Justification of the Project ............................................................. 1
   Description of the Dissertation Process ......................................... 3
   Expectations from the Project ......................................................... 3

II. THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS ................... 5
   Introduction ..................................................................................... 5
   Biblical and Theological Framework of Youth ............................... 7
      Biblical Terminology ..................................................................... 8
      Theological Reflections ............................................................... 9
         Old Testament .......................................................................... 9
         New Testament ........................................................................ 18
   The Sociohistorical Framework of Youth ....................................... 30
      The End of Childhood and the Beginning of Adulthood ............. 32
      The Rise of Adolescence ............................................................ 34
      Youth—A Socio-cultural Force ................................................... 35
   The Socio-psychological Framework of Youth ............................... 37
      Science Detects Adolescence ....................................................... 38
      Developmental Theories ............................................................ 41
      Identity Development: Commitment and Meaning-Making .......... 42
      Narrative Psychology and Adolescence ...................................... 43
      Adolescence in the Light of Field Theory and Social Systems ...... 44
      Faith Development and Conversion ........................................... 46
   Conclusion ...................................................................................... 49
      Socialization Is the Primal Factor of Youth Evangelism ............. 49
      The Growing Importance of the Extended Family ..................... 52
      The Growing Importance of the Life Phase of Youth ................ 53
      Reaching People in Times of Transition and Significant Change ... 55
      Youth Conversion in a Communal Context ................................. 57
      Spirituality Fosters Adolescent Well-being and Thriving .......... 60
      Reaching Young People Calls for Contextualization ................. 61

3
III. A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOUTH EVANGELISM, A SURVEY OF LITERATURE AND POSTMODERN PARADIGMS

Introduction ......................................................... 67
Youth Evangelism, Youth Ministry, or Youth Education? 67
The Church between Nurturing Youth and Youth Evangelism 69
Youth as Most Receptive Group Experienced but Not Recognized. 74
The Rise of Youth Ministry ........................................... 77
The Beginnings—Socializing and Educating Youth for the Church and Society 77
Parachurch Youth Evangelism and the Youth Rallies .......... 81
Youth Ministry: Professionalized, Program-Oriented, Entertaining. 85
Relocating Youth Ministry and Rediscovering Youth Evangelism. 90
Youth Evangelism and Youth Ministry Literature ............... 93
How to Do Youth Ministry: Inside-Out or Outside-In .......... 93
Models of Youth Ministry. ......................................... 95
Theological Reflections of Youth Ministry and Youth Evangelism 98
Youth Evangelism in the Postmodern Context ..................... 103
Parameters of Postmodernism. .................................... 104
Relativism ................................................................ 105
Subjectivism ........................................................... 105
Pluralism .................................................................. 106
Holism ..................................................................... 106
Community ................................................................ 107
Spirituality ................................................................ 107
Symbolism ............................................................... 108
Stories .................................................................... 108
Postmodernism and Evangelism ...................................... 109
New Opportunities to Speak about God ......................... 110
Implications for Evangelism ....................................... 113
Summary .................................................................... 118

IV. YOUTH EVANGELISM INITIATIVE “LINK2LIFE” ................. 120

The Evolution of Link2Life ............................................. 121
The Age of Adventist Satellite Evangelism to Reach “People” .. 122
The Need for a Youth NET Initiative .............................. 124
Main Evangelistic Objectives of the German Youth NET .... 126
Elaboration of the Motto and the Basic Concept .................. 128
Promotion of Link2Life Among SDA Youth ....................... 132
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After Link2Life Is before Link2Life</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link2Life 2005—Different but Still the Same</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Link2Life</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net-Evangelism as a New Form of Event Evangelism</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Evangelistic Preaching of Link2Life</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preaching Christ</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communicative Method and Contextualization</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Preaching—Telling God’s Story</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation of Altar Call?</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Preaching</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Technology, Media, and the Arts</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies and Images</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and Internet</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link2Life Talk: Authentic Life Images</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link2Life Soap</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format of the Link2Life Program</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Format of Link2Life 2002</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Format of Link2Life 2004</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. EVALUATION OF “LINK2LIFE”</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Process</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Quantitative Data</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Qualitative Data</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Results of Link2Life 2002 and 2004</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Local Venues</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and Guests</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and Guests in 2002</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and Guests in 2004</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Appreciation of the Evangelistic Program</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Appraisal of the Program</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Music Program</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link2Life Talk and Link2Life Soap</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Preaching</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship Evangelism</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about Results?</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Impact</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Impact</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected Result: Reaching Both, Young and Old</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Approach That Motivates People to Invite Guests</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Follow-Up</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............................................. 233

Youth Evangelism a Missional Priority ............................................. 233
Postmodern Youth Evangelism: Incarnational and Contextual ............. 235
Less Professional Evangelists, More Authentic Witnesses ................. 238
Evangelistic Event in a Systemic Context ....................................... 239
Fostering and Funding Youth Evangelism ....................................... 241

Appendix
A. BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY ................................................................. 242
B. GOD INTERACTING WITH YOUTH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ........... 252
C. JESUS AND THE CHILDREN .............................................................. 258
D. WERE THE DISCIPLES YOUTH? ....................................................... 269
E. PERCEPTION OF CHILDHOOD IN ANCIENT TIMES ....................... 271
F. YOUTH IN ANCIENT TIMES ............................................................. 281
G. THE PERCEPTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND THE MIDDLE AGE .................................................. 290
H. THE EMERGENCE OF ADOLESCENCE ............................................ 311
I. YOUTH AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL FORCE IN SOCIETY ....................... 320
J. MAJOR THEORIES OF ADOLESCENCE ........................................... 329
K. FAITH AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH ...................... 369
L. LINK2LIFE 2002 & 2004: LIST OF TOPICS ..................................... 406
M. DURATION OF LINK2LIFE SERMONS .......................................... 409
N. EXAMPLES OF LINK2LIFE SERMONS .......................................... 410
O. FEEDBACK LINK2LIFE 2002 & 2004 – MAILS ................................... 441
P. QUESTIONNAIRES LINK2LIFE 2002 & 2004 ................................... 492
Q. LOCAL VENUES LINK2LIFE 2002 & 2004 ..................................... 497
R. MATERIAL AND ADVERTISEMENT FOR LOCAL VENUES ................ 501
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Total Number of Participants and Guests of Link2Life 2002 ........................................ 190
2. Total Number of Participants and Guests of Link2Life 2004 ........................................ 192
3. General Appreciation of the Link2Life Program 2002 .................................................. 195
4. General Appreciation of the Link2Life Program 2004 .................................................. 197
5. Appreciation of the Music Program L2L 2002 (feedback) ........................................ 200
7. Preaching L2L 2002 and 2004 (feedback) ................................................................. 206
8. Impact of Link2Life 2002 Half a Year Later ............................................................... 211
9. Impact of Link2Life 2004 Half a Year Later ............................................................... 213
10. Total Number of Baptisms in the Swiss German Conference .................................. 215
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Reaching unchurched youth is an important obligation and a serious challenge for the SDA Church, especially in Europe. The SDA Church in Germany and Switzerland developed a strategy to reach postmodern young people with the Satellite Youth Evangelism “Link2Life.” This evangelistic effort had been conducted in 2002 and 2004 and involved almost two hundred local SDA churches and youth groups. However, the effectiveness of “Link2Life” has not been evaluated yet.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to establish a theological, socio-historical, and socio-psychological foundation in order to highlight the missional priority of youth evangelism for the church, to evaluate the effectiveness of “Link2Life,” and to establish basic recommendations to the Church.

Justification of the Project

A. God entrusted his disciples with the Great Commission and sent them out to be His witnesses in all the earth. The Church exists and lives in the context of this commission, and is called to bring the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation, tribe, language, and people. This call implies that we undertake any effort
to reach people, whatever their origin, their culture, their language, and individuality might be. Young people are different in “origin” (background), culture, language, and their perception of live. In respect to this call we have an obligation to reach the youth of our time.

B. Adolescence is crucial to the future life of the adult since it is marked by serious reflection, change, and decision-making. It is therefore suggested to see the lifespan of youth as a “primary mission field.”¹ About 80 percent of all decisions for Christ are made before the age of twenty-five years.²

C. Most of the Church’s evangelistic outreach is of a general nature concerning its target group and does not reach unchurched young people.

D. Reaching unchurched youth has to become more prominent in all our thinking about evangelism, how to direct our efforts, and invest our recourses.

E. As a Church that takes mission and evangelism very seriously we need to have appropriate means to reach postmodern youth. This requires the willingness and ability to contextualize the Gospel.

F. Evangelism has to be understood as a communal activity in a systemic context.

Youth evangelism in general but also specific youth evangelistic programs need an intergenerational community where young people experience the biblical faith in Jesus in incarnational and relational terms.


Description of the Dissertation Process

A. Establish a theological foundation for youth evangelism.
B. Explore adolescence as a special interest for evangelistic efforts.
C. Study the developmental receptiveness of youth for the gospel message.
D. Review of selected literature on youth evangelism and postmodernism.
E. Study the paradigms of postmodernism in order to meet the challenge to reach unchurched youth with the Gospel.
F. Study the cultural relevance of evangelistic outreach to young people—especially the place of media, and music in an evangelistic context.
G. Present the SDA Satellite Youth Evangelism “Link2Life” in 2002 and 2004.
H. Evaluate and compare the effectiveness of “Link2Life” 2002 and 2004 as a strategy to reach unchurched youth.
I. Suggest basic recommendations and directions concerning youth evangelism.

Expectations from the Project

A. The study of the theological, sociological, and historical foundations for youth evangelism will help to understand the need and purpose of cultural relevance concerning evangelistic efforts to reach unchurched young people.
B. This project will establish historical evidence for the general nature of the Church’s evangelistic effort to reach youth.
C. An evaluation and documentation of “Link2Life” as a youth evangelistic model may help to establish recommendations to the Church that can help the Church become more aware of its mission to reach postmodern youth.
D. This project will have an appendix that provides resources from “Link2Life” 2002 and 2004 that might be of help for further youth evangelistic projects.
CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

An evangelistic focus on young people involves an acknowledgement of the societal lifespan of youth as well as the specific psychological nature of adolescence. There is even a need for a more thorough theological reflection on the youth.

The tradition of Christian theology does not know many records of specific theological reflections on youth. Children and youth seem to be a rather new concern in the field of systematic and practical theological research. In Christian dogmatics a section on children and youth is hard to find so far. If at all this subject is somehow hidden in a general anthropological reflection. There are certainly several reasons for that.

First, youth or the phase of life we call adolescence is not just God-given. Besides biological and psychological aspects youth is also a product of historical and sociological developments. Due to the course of history particularly in the western world a specific consideration of children and especially adolescents as a distinctive part of today’s society is a phenomenon of the late Modern Age. Before that, the youth age was just not on the radar screen of the theological discussion and praxis. Second, since theology often follows Christian practices and cultural circumstances a systematic reflection on youth and youth evangelism is not to be expected before an actual youth
ministry evolved that finally demands the church’s attention. However, the history of Christian youth ministry encompasses already more than 150 years, but a more profound theological discussion is a fairly recent endeavor. Not long ago for instance youth ministry had often been located somewhere in the Christian education enterprise rather than been considered as a central and integral part of practical theology. Third, in the past century childhood and adolescence themselves became fields of interest of specific scientific study and research. Rather than to just see and understand them as objects of the educational task of adults to teach, lead, and integrate the next generation into society, children and youth have more and more been perceived as separate subjects which need to be understood and studied for their own sake. Particularly the emergence of a developmental science provided new understandings concerning childhood and adolescence. Today not only sociology or different subdivisions of psychology but a growing interdisciplinary forum contributes to the scientific study of childhood and adolescence. ¹ Theology therefore is challenged to play a more active part in this matter since the issue of a thorough rational for Christian youth ministry and specific youth evangelism cannot be decided by just referring to resources of other scientific disciplines. Fourth, youth ministry is seen to be in a crisis today. Conventional approaches to reach youth and minister to them are questioned since they are no longer working as they did in past decades. New approaches are discussed and within this quest the call for a deeper

¹Just in 2007 the European Journal of Developmental Science (EJDS) has been launched with the aim “to bring together work by researchers across different subdisciplines within Psychology, as well as across other disciplines, such as Anthropology, Biology, Communication Science, Neuroscience, Linguistics, Medical Science, Ethology, History, Philosophy, and Sociology, to discuss questions relevant to human development.” H. Scheithauer et al., “The European Journal of Developmental Science—And: Developmental Science—A New Discipline or ‘Old Wine in New Bottles’?” EJDS 1, no. 1 (2007): 2.
theological thinking and a more profound reflection on reaching young people with the Gospel becomes louder.

In this chapter the broader context of the adolescent life span is explored. The biblical and theological framework of youth will highlight a basic understanding of adolescence and in the context of creation and the human fall. A brief socio-historical overview helps to understand that the life span of youth is also a cultural phenomenon and is shaped by society. The socio-psychological aspect of adolescence is presented in a short section that is based upon the major theories of human development psychology. Since adolescence is marked by a process of self-conception and personality organization it is also important to study what impact and role faith and spirituality may have in the socio-psychological developmental processes during adolescence. A more in-depth discussion of the issues addressed in this chapter can be found in Volume 2.

**Biblical and Theological Framework of Youth**

Biblical terminology reveals a richness of words to designate young people with a general positive connotation. From a biblical perspective such a positive undertone regarding the emergence of a new generation is theologically justified. In this respect the Old Testament sets the basic tone which later, in the New Testament, will sound loud and clear in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

A survey of Old and New Testament terminology gives insight in the lexicological spectrum that designates young people in the Bible and draws some basic conclusions. The biblical and theological framework of youth is further explored by briefly highlighting specific passages or references and to reflect on some of the theological implications regarding adolescence.
Biblical Terminology

The way something is named in each language, the linguistic evolution and the usage of words, terms, and expressions often reflect a certain human cognition, association, and awareness concerning these things. Thus, there is reason for the denotation and connotation of things and therefore word studies are by all means expedient. The biblical languages\(^2\) know a variety of terms to relate to young people. However, the biblical record hardly reveals any clear delimitation of youth from children or adults or know a specific age of adolescence.

The survey of the child and youth related words in the Old and the New Testament reveals a broad spectrum of denotations of the exponents of young people.\(^3\) The richness of terms also reflects the value of young people in biblical times. Particularly in the Hebrew context the varying words have in general a positive connotation. Only the Greek \textit{pais} and \textit{nepios} seem to have a rather negative undertone. In Hebrew many terms grow out of the agricultural context and reflect basic experiences of life. The sowing and growing of plants are metaphorically related to the evolution of a new generation. Thus, the basic ideas are a continuation and progress of life, as well as connectedness and solidarity with the ancestors. As seeds young people (especially the males) continue the life of their fathers, of “the house,” and guarantee a future. The father lives on in the lives of his offspring. In this respect children are a blessing (Ps 127:3, 128:3-6) and a gift of God (Gen 4:1.25; Isa 66:9), and vice versa infertility is a

\(^2\)Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

\(^3\)See Volume 2, Appendix A.
curse and a shame (Gen 20:17-18, 30:23). The identity of the new generation is shaped and affected by the fathers—positively as well as negatively.

Although young people are generally associated with being strong, lusty, vigorous, and ready for action, especially when they reach physical maturity, there is also a slight critic in evidence concerning unreasonableness and puerility. Although the youth are not seen as a specific and distinct phase of life, it is associated with certain attributes and behaviors that seem to be typical for a youthful age.

Though some terms actually refer to a specific stage of development or age bracket, it is hardly possible to assign them to a specific age group since the attribution often remains permeable. A systematic categorization of the terms would be hardly conducive; nevertheless, there are some texts that reflect a rough sequence of terms as a differentiation of generations as in Jer 6:11 or 51:22.

Theological Reflections

Although youth are not identified as a distinctive group of people in society young people are part of the family and public life as today. The perception and understanding of young people has to be shaped by theology since anthropology as well as sociology and psychology of youth are otherwise encapsuled in an immanent framework of interpretation. A brief survey of important theological concepts and biblical motives shall help to put the life phase of youth into a transcendent perspective.

Old Testament

The terminological survey of Hebrew words used in the Old Testament to

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4Like yoneq, 'olel, yeled, 'elem, bachur, or brephos and paidion.
designate the young generation highlights the fact that children are seen as a gift and a blessing of God since in the context of the continuation and progress of life a new generation offers a future to the “house,” the tribe, and the people. Human life itself, however, begins with creation and that is where all anthropological reflections have to be tight up to.

God created parents

The Old Testament opens the story of life with creation. Since human life is not a product of mere chance but intentionally created by God humanity is fundamentally put into a context of relationship to both God as well as to the other. Growth and development in all aspects of human life, therefore, has to be understood in an intergenerational context of relationships. Before there was a child there were adults. In the same way human identity is fundamentally to be understood in a relational context connected to the encounter with God and other humans.

Bearing the image of God

Humans have been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26; 9:6). This applies not only for the first man and woman but for all generations to come since “there is one likeness after all, and it still inheres in the little child . . . and billions of

5 Since creation children and youth have ever been intended to be part of a family and to be nurtured physically, psychically, socially, as well as spiritually in the context of a loving and supporting relationship to a mother and a father—or more generally, to caring adults. Healthy development happens first in the context of the family and requires intergenerational relationships.

6 In the creation of humanity God does not appear as an impersonal absolute or singular individual but as a living and creative “us” (Gen 1:26). The God of the Bible is a triune oneness. When the Bible states that God is love (1 John 4:16) it does not refer to a concept or idea of love but to a living reality. The ultimate reality is a God living in perfect intimate personal relationship. God is relational and so is God’s design of human life. It is embedded in a relational triangle that involves God, the other, and oneself.
other exemplars, living and dead, of the creature called 'adam.' Because this is by creation an objective reality of all humanity children and youth equally bear the image of God and have equal value as adults do. The imago dei is not just to be seen in functional or moral terms but primarily in relational terms. True identity is therefore not only related to people (family, society, etc.) and the world (culture, work, nationality, etc.) but more deeply to knowing God. Human self-awareness is inseparably connected to an awareness of God, the creator and ultimate parent. Inasmuch as a child cannot know whose child he or she is out of him- or herself all humans fundamentally need the encounter with an other being to understand themselves. Thus, the identity formation of adolescence needs a relational context and thus the other. In light of creation God is the ultimate other.

Freedom of decision

Being made in the image of God every human being possesses the capability and the responsibility of personal response to God. God gave man the freedom of decision and responsibility for his action (Gen 2:15-17). Humans are thus able to grow and develop, to create and shape, to build and invent. Humans are “made open for the future with an inner, onward thrust, in each single stage bearing the image of God.”

Totality of being

God made humans open for the future with an inner, onward thrust thereby

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8 Johann Gerhardt, “Why the Church Should Minister to the Youth,” in Getting It Right, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Youth Department (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 12.
bearing the image of God in every single life stage. In the light of the Old Testament the child is therefore not to be seen as something incomplete or inferior. Instead, the completeness of human life and the totality of being apply to all life stages. Man became human, a “living soul,” when God breathed the *ruach*—the breath of life (Gen 2:7). A human being is a totality of being and not just a combination of separate parts and impulses. This completeness of the person is rooted in the very human nature and is not something to attain or achieve. Development and growth intended by the creator implies therefore that a human being is always a totality of being through all stages and phases of life. Children and youth are, thus, neither less human or grow from incomplete to complete (like believed in Antiquity) nor are they just little adults (as the medieval society and church believed). The totality of the human being and the basic equality of the life phases imply that any Christian ministry, and especially evangelism, needs to focus upon every dimension of existence and cannot be selective or exclusive regarding age groups.

The human fall and the inheritance of sin

The fall of humanity (Gen 3) destroys the initial harmony (*shalom*) with the creator and all creation. Man has lost his integrity and unity. Brokenness pervades all aspects of life and relationships. It results in distorted and broken identities. Deprivation of true relationship results in a deep-rooted loneliness. Ever since, sin is not something that is learned by humans but owned. In this context it seems not irrelevant to note that before there was a child there was sin. The human fall was not caused by a new generation but by the previous. The world and the living conditions of the first child had been shaped by the parent generation. The need for salvation from the consequences of
sin—the mistrust and separation from God—and the need for the restoration of the life intended by God designate the new reality of humanity.

God’s presence in the life of youth

Although the human fall estranged man from God and brokenness pervades ever since all aspects of the human life resulting in distorted and broken identities, this loss of human integrity and unity did not erase the initial creation in the image of God. Despite the reality of sin children in the Old Testament are not just seen as little sinners. Rather they are molded by God himself and thus God’s gift and blessing. The self-image and identity of young people are therefore not to be crushed but to be uplifted directed into a relationship with a loving God who already put his mark on them.9 Despite the fact of the fall of humanity God is still directly involved in the progeny of life.10 Because God is seen as being involved in the molding of the child in the mother’s womb the presence and involvement of God in the life of a child can generally be assumed. The actual dilemma of the human condition after the fall may be seen less by the general absence of God but rather in the ignorance or unawareness of his presence. In prophetic literature the presence of God in Israel is also associated with the well-being and playfulness of

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9 Although the fall has fundamentally changed the context of human life and has obscured or distorted the image of God in humans, nevertheless, “it cannot be smashed or erased” (Towner, “Children and the Image of God,” 319). The child and youth are not just born as sinners but in as much they are humans bearing the image of God. Created in the image of God every human has a capacity and desire for good. The self-image and identity of children and youth is not to be crushed but to be lifted up and put into the context of a loving God who put his mark on them and who is present respectively already there when we turn to him.

10 According to the biblical understanding God is knitting together the child in the mother’s womb (Ps 139:13-16) and gives the child identity before he or she is born (Jer 1:5). Because of his direct involvement children are seen to be a reward, blessing, and a heritage from God (Ps 127:3-5). God’s command to be fruitful and to increase in number (Gen 1:28) implies that having children corresponds with his will.
The sinfulness of the people, on the other hand, is reflected in their mistreatment of children. “The Israelites reveal the depth of their sin in their treatment of children, yet God’s will for Israel is revealed in the safety and playfulness of children.”

Emerging generation and the covenant

Children are an integral part of God’s covenant promise as well as of the covenant fulfillment, which puts belonging to God’s people first. Circumcision as a covenant sign (Gen 17:10-13) documented that a child (boy) belonged to the people of God by birth. The Old Testament knows no exclusion of children from the public cultus and the worship of God’s people. Even little children seemed to have been involved in any

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11In Zech 8:5 playing children in the city streets, their well-being and happiness, is seen as a sign of God’s presence in Jerusalem and as a sign of the fulfillment of the promise (see also Zech 9:17). In the prophetic literature the public and official treatment of widows and of children, especially of orphans, is often used as an index of how far God’s people is from embodying the Lord’s will. See also, for example, Isa 1:17-23, 10:2; Zech 7:10.


13Children play an important part in God’s covenant promise. In fact, all the promises of God in the Old Testament are somehow related to the initial promise to Abraham to be the father of many nations, to have countless offspring that will inherit the land that God will give to them as an everlasting possession, and to bless all nations on earth through them (see Gen 15:3-5; 17:1-8; 22:17-18; 28:14). Such a promise, of course, also depends upon the birth and continuing life of children. Finally, in the context of the promise of descendants to Abraham God’s salvation history is inseparably connected with the history of man. Christ himself, the Son of Man, was born as a descendant of David and finally of Abraham. Therefore, children are an integral part of the covenant promise and even a sign of its advancing fulfillment.


15That, however, did and does not neglect the personal decision and the individual’s intentional walk with God (Deut 10:16; 30:6 refer to the circumcision of the heart) as well as the conditional character of the covenant promise (Deut 6; 2 Sam 7:12-16; 1 Kgs 6:11-13: “If you follow my decrees . . . I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father”). “Here is the delicate balance between the corporate solidarity, whereby God deals with a whole community through the generations, and individual responsibility, where each person must answer for his own sin. As our young people emerge into adulthood, we should be challenging them to make their own choice and to take responsibility for their own spiritual lives.” See Mark Ashton and Phil Moon, *Christian Youth Work* (London: Authentic Media, 2007), 26.
worship activity whether they understood it or not.\textsuperscript{16} The Old Testament also teaches that it is a pivotal task of the adult generation to nurture, socialize, and introduce an emerging generation into the peculiarity of the covenant people.\textsuperscript{17}

Youth need instruction

That older generations sometimes have a rather pessimistic perception of youth seems to be a perennial phenomenon. A negative view of youth is to be found in the Greek and especially Roman society as well as in Judaism. Although not absent a pessimistic view of youth seems to be less pronounced in the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{18} The wisdom literature suggests that adolescence is a specific time for instruction and encouragement to “fear the Lord” and to follow the path of righteousness.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16}The Pesach for instance was highly ritualized and full of meaning. A text like Exod 13:14 suggests that children have been involved in all the rituals and activities and by experiencing the worship activities in the family and community the growing child starts to wonder and ponder over the meaning of these things by asking questions. A similar process is indicated in Deut 6:20 where the living example of the adults following God’s law fosters the interest of the child in God’s instructions for life. In the New Testament the inclusiveness of children in the worship activities of the people of God can be seen in the \textit{oikos} formula, by the fact that the early church met in the homes of people where children must have been around, and by an argument of silence, namely, that there is also nowhere a reference in the New Testament regarding the exclusion of children from worship activities.

\textsuperscript{17}A new generation not only needs to know the memories and hopes of the people of God but even more important to know its own covenant God and his living word (see Deut 6:4-7–20-25).

\textsuperscript{18}There are critical passages referring to explicit juvenile wrongdoing. There is a “lack of judgement” (Prov 7:7), inexperience (1 Chr 22:5; Jer 1:6), indecisiveness (2 Chr 13:7), lack of wisdom (Prov 1:4), easily led astray (Prov 7:22-25), drunkenness (Prov 23:19-21; Eccl 10:17), violence (Prov 1:10-19), gluttony (Prov 28:7), sexual wrongdoing (Prov 7:7-23), and so on. The negative characteristics associated with youth and the many admonitions show that youth is also seen in the context of sin (Job 13:26; Ps 25:7; Jer 31:19).

\textsuperscript{19}Most of the negative attributes are to be found in the wisdom literature and especially the Proverbs. This is hardly surprising since wisdom literature in general is intended to teach its readers. References to negative examples or warnings of negative consequences are therefore common. Especially the first part of the book of Proverbs displays such an argumentation since the primary design and purpose of the book of Proverbs is that of a father teaching his adolescent son. The son is advised and warned not to follow the folly and immorality of youth (Prov 1:10-19). To understand

Proverbs first of all as a teaching and instruction of adolescents is further supported by the topical emphases of all the warnings. There are warnings against criminality, adultery, laziness, the company with
Youth and God’s Story of Salvation

Children and youth in Israel are involved in the history of salvation which finally serves as the meta-narrative that provides the ultimate concept or framework of meaning to make sense out of one’s life.\(^{20}\) By understanding themselves as being involved in God’s salvation history and by accepting salvation through Christ young people can discover who they are in a non-self-centered way. The Old Testament reveals a God who is actually interacting with children and youth who obviously can have a strong faith and a genuine spirituality.\(^{21}\) Young people in the Old Testament narratives obviously find false and wicked friends, youth gangs, unrestraint behavior, and against a life of debauchery. Also the last passage, the praise of a wife with a noble character, is intended to guide a young man for the time he is looking for a wife who will finally bring him lasting good as well as public honor and respect (Prov 31:11-12, 23, 30). Also Solomon’s collection of proverbs in the second part of the book can be seen as a parental legacy of wisdom and advice to the adolescent son. Throughout the book of Proverbs the adolescent man, and of course anyone too, is called to cherish the wisdom of previous generations and to follow the counsel of the father who directs to the ultimate wisdom which is seen in the “fear of the Lord” and the obedience to God’s word and law (Prov 1:7, 9:10). Such counsel does by no means diminish the fact that the time of youth is also associated with joie de vivre. Contrariwise, the adolescent is encouraged to enjoy the time of youth since it will vanish. Youth are told to do what ever their heart delights to do—however, always remembering that one is responsible before God for everything in life (Ecc 11:9). Solomon points to this fact not in order to stall the joy of youth or the joie de vivre but to remember young people that there is no such thing as a life without limits and without responsibility. After all, the very fact of the book of Proverbs, but many Old Testament passages too, suggest adolescence to be the right time for profound instruction and teaching as well as encouragement to take responsibility for their own life. This does of course not neglect that parents should guide and teach their children from their earliest age.

\(^{20}\)Creation as well as the Fall of humanity taking its course through the life of the first family make all humans partakers of the fundamental meta-narrative of salvation history that begins with living in peace, the \textit{shalom}, with God and all creation and ends with the restoration of the lost life in a new creation (Gen 3:15, 21). Salvation history, starting with creation, culminating with Christ, and accomplished with a new creation, provides the concept or framework of meaning to make sense out of life, the world, and oneself. The life of Jesus also presents a model of what it means to be human.

\(^{21}\)Several stories in the Old Testament give evidence that God interacts with children and youth using them in the context of his salvation history. \textit{Joseph} was a teenager when he was sold by his brothers and finally became a slave in Potiphar’s house. God paved the way of this faithful youth to become second in the hierarchy of Egyptian ruler ship and made him a person through whom to bring reconciliation and preservation for his people (Gen 45:5). Or God used \textit{Miriam}, a young girl, to take care of the future of the Hebrew nation when she wisely offered the pharaoh’s daughter to find a nursing woman for the baby Moses (Exod 2:4-10). Although the ardor of youth led \textit{Samson} astray and brought suffering upon him and others God finally prevails by leading to the intended goal (Judg 16:30). God called the child \textit{Samuel} to priestly and prophetic service and had him mentored by Eli, an older and more experienced spiritual adult. The story of \textit{David} reveals that God grants victory to his people not by force of men but actually by using
their destiny and purpose in life by detecting and deploring their God-given potentials. The youthful achievements in the Old Testament show that adolescence is in general a period when great accomplishments and where spiritual leadership are possible. Young people obviously do not have to wait to be accepted as experienced adults before they can achieve things with and for God. In the Old Testament God also puts young people into leading positions—what generally seems not to be uncommon in Old Testament times. This often involves also meaningful adults who are coaching and mentoring youth in their leading responsibilities. Finally, the Old Testament narratives highlight the fact that God is able to use "ordinary young people to do extraordinary things."  

Reciprocal relationship and peaceful cooperation between young and old

The untroubled reciprocal relationship and the peaceful cooperation between the emerging generation and the adult generation is a metaphor for the messianic age in the Old Testament. According to the canonic order the last message of the Old Testament in Mal 4:5-6 [3:23-24] culminates in a messianic prospect that is focused on a new beginning in which everything will be transformed. As a sign of this transformation brought by the "Elijah" it is said that the hearts of the fathers will turn to their sons and

the faith and the zeal of a youth (1 Sam 17). Josiah was enthroned as a child, as a teenager he was already praised for his faith (2 Chr 34:3a), and finally initiated the most profound spiritual reformation of Israel. Daniel and his friends were faithful youth that God blessed to become respected leaders in Babylon. The remarkable prophetic ministry of Jeremiah began when God called him in his youth (Jer 1:2-8). See Volume 2, Appendix B.

22 Efrem Smith, Raising Up Young Heroes—Developing a Revolutionary Youth Ministry (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 14.
the hearts of the sons to their fathers.  

Thereby it is suggested that such a relationship requires first the readiness and the willingness of the adult generation to caringly turn to the youth and to be attentive to them. Although the turning of the hearts is seen as a consequence of divine intervention it seems not to be by chance that the turning of the father's hearts to their sons is mentioned first. The succession in the description of this reciprocal relationship seems to suggest that a peaceful cooperation and coexistence among the generations requires first the readiness and willingness of the adult generation to be attentive to and to care for the following generation. Such an attitude of the older and wiser seems to open the hearts of the younger and turn them to their "fathers."

New Testament

The Gospels and in particular the ministry and teachings of Jesus reveal a high valuation of the emerging generation. Jesus actually puts children in the focus of some of

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23 There are several attempts to interpret this passage. Some have seen in the restoration of the fathers to the sons (children) an allusion to the resurrection of the dead. See for example, James M. Scott, ed., Restoration Old Testament, Jewish & Christian Perspectives (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 443. Others see in the "sons" a reference to the children of Israel who will finally return to the faith of their fathers, the patriarchs. See Francis D. Nichol, ed., The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 4:1134. It is true that in the angel's announcement of the birth of John the Baptist there is a reference to the prophecy of Malachi thereby suggesting that the son of Zechariah and Elisabeth will be filled with the spirit of Elijah and cause the spiritual return of Israel to their Lord (Luke 1:16-17). In the light of this reference the most accepted interpretation is therefore that John the Baptist would be God's agent to cause the hearts of the fathers and the children (the co-existent generations) to unite in obedience to God. Actually, there were many divisions both political and religious among the Jewish people. Nevertheless, history proved that such a spiritual unification of the people of Israel did not happen. However, neither of the interpretations, neither resurrection nor spiritual reformation or unification of Israel, do actually pay credit to the reciprocal nature of the text—fathers to sons and sons to the fathers. Besides, the actual turning of the hearts rather points to the work of the Messiah which may have been foreshadowed by the ministry of John the Baptist (see John 1:23-27). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in ancient times "the characteristics of evil times include the disharmony between father and child" [Peter Balla, The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and Its Environment (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 12] and the overcoming of the enmity between the generations "appears as a sign of the end times in Jewish and Christian writings." Therefore one can symbolically as well as literally understand the prospect of the messianic age in Malachi in terms of the harmony between fathers and sons, respectively between the generations.
his most profound teachings. The synoptics have several references to children and youth. All of them recount some important encounters Jesus had with young people and document profound teachings of Jesus in reference to children. Surprisingly, the Gospel of John does not provide substantial material on the subject since John recounts no story of an encounter between Jesus and a child nor does he narrate any healings of children and youth or have something to say about Jesus’ infancy or youth. Thompson concludes that apart from the metaphor ‘children of God’ actual “children are simply silent”\textsuperscript{24} in the Gospel of John. It also comes with some surprise that Jesus’ positive estimation of the young people is only partially if at all reflected in the Epistles.

Mary and Jesus

That God became man in Jesus, even by a natural birth, is one of the deepest mysteries of Christian believes. Of all the women in Israel God had chosen Mary from Nazareth to be the mother of the Messiah. She must have been still a teenage girl when she gave birth to Jesus.\textsuperscript{25} The very fact of Jesus’ birth implies that the Son of God went through all stages of childhood. This is very noteworthy since thereby the child per se and his or her development are valued. Even more, Jesus’ growing up bestows an


\textsuperscript{25}See Joachim Jeremias, \textit{Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus} (Fortress Press, 1969, trans. from the 3rd German ed., 1962), p. 365. Jeremias cites Strack and Billerbeck (2:374), that the usual age for a girl’s betrothal was between twelve and twelve and a half and that the marriage itself ordinarily took place one year after betrothal. See also Balla, \textit{The Child-Parent Relationship}, 51.
unprecedented importance and dignity to every young human creature in all of his or her developmental stages.\textsuperscript{26}

The only teenage story of Jesus is reported in Luke 2:41-52. In his thirteenth year and thus around the age of puberty Jesus went with his parents up to the festival in Jerusalem and finally was found discussing the Torah with teachers of the Law in the temple.\textsuperscript{27} He has impressed them with great insight and knowledge. That the parents first did not realize that Jesus remained in Jerusalem and that it took one day for them to find it out may be due to the fact that Mary and Joseph travelled with all their entourage, relatives and friends (Luke 2:44), and that a boy in his thirteenth year was no longer expected to be under close parental observance.

However, although aware of his divine purpose (Luke 2:49) Jesus submitted himself under the parental authority of Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51) and grew up as a

\textsuperscript{26}The relative silence of the Gospels about Jesus' childhood and adolescence does not belittle these phases of life rather it reflects the cultural background of the Gospel writers. See William A. Strange, \textit{Children in the Early Church} (Carlisle, PA: Paternoster Press, 1996), 40. Strange states that whereas "modern people have been taught to see childhood as a time of formation and growth, a time when a person passes through certain crucial stages of development" people in the ancient world were "simply not so reflective about childhood and did not see human personality in the same developmental way." Ibid. Since personality and character were seen to be defined much more by the outset it was more important to know somebody’s ancestry than the story of his childhood. Matthew opens his Gospel just by providing such a list of ancestors and Luke by following another rational presents a genealogy in his third chapter. In their collection of stories about Jesus' birth and infancy both Matthew and Luke provided enough to support their arguments that Jesus is "the Son of David, divinely begotten and born in fulfillment of prophecy and also a vulnerable child, already drawing around himself the menace of hostile powers." Ibid., 44. A society that assumed omens and portents to attend the birth of great men stories and incidents like the prophecy of Gabriel (Luke 1:30-33), Mary’s song (Luke 1:46-55), the angels proclamation (Luke 2.10-12), the coming of the wise from the east (Matt 2:1-12), or the oracles of Simeon (Luke 2:28-32, 34-35) and Anna (Luke 2:38) were much more of interest than any story about the life and upbringing of a child.

\textsuperscript{27}Although this is not the place to comment in detail on this incident it is interesting to note that it happened just when the ancient world assumed that childhood ends. Despite the fact that the actual Jewish \textit{bar mitzvah} was invented not until medieval times the custom to introduce a boy around thirteen years as full member into the community as well as to teach him the Torah with the expectancy that he may live by it, was already vivid in Jesus’ time.
usual Jewish boy following his father’s trade (see Mark 6:2-3). From early childhood up
to his adulthood the Son of God has been living an ordinary life in an extraordinary way.

Jesus healing youth and parental care

The synoptics depict several parents with loving care for their offspring. A
couple of incidents are reported were parents are earnestly begging for healing on behalf
of their sick children respectively youth. The healing reports of children that are sick or
even have past away magnify not only Jesus’ compassion for the suffering of young
people but also reveal that healing often comes as an answer to the intercessional parental
pleading on behalf of their children. The love and faith of parents who bring their
children to Jesus seem to move him. Jesus himself shows his love for children by
hugging and blessing them as some kind of an intimate parental or priestly act.

Jesus’ countercultural attitude
towards the child

The synoptics report specific encounters between Jesus and children that reveal
not only a different perception of children but also an actual countercultural approach in

28 Luke refers to a teaching in which Jesus points to a caring father who initially does not open the
door of his house to a friend at midnight since his children are lying in bed with him (Luke 11:9-13).
Although this could be seen as a pretense, since he himself does not want to be bothered at that time, the
point of Jesus’ story assumes that a father cares for the children and gives them what they need.

29 Jairus, a Jewish father and one of the synagogue rulers runs to Jesus who came to town pleading
earnestly to follow him home where his teenage daughter is dying (Mark 5:22-43; Matt 9:18-26; Luke
8:40-56). There is a Greek woman born in Syrian Phoenicia that fell to the feet of Jesus persistent begging
him to drive out a demon from her daughter (Mark 7:24-30, Matt 15:21-28). Another father approaches
Jesus asking him to cast out an evil spirit from his son (Mark 9:17-26, Matt 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-42).
Coming to Nain Jesus was moved by the grief of a widow over the death of her only son and he raises the
youth (neaniskos) unrequested (Luke 7:11-15).

30 See Volume 2, Appendix C.

31 For a more detailed study of Jesus and the children see Volume 2, Appendix C.
Jesus’ ministry to children as well as an opposed attitude against the common social and religious conceptions. While also the New Testament reflects the rather ambiguous attitude towards children and youth in the ancient societies Jesus’ attitude is surprisingly different. As he puts the child in the midst of the disciples he makes it to be the focal concern among his followers. He even declares that the Reign of God belongs

32 See Volume 2, Appendix E and Appendix F.

33 However, the New Testament also reflects the common Greco-Roman perception of children as incomplete and irrational. This appraisal becomes apparent by the rather frequent use of nepios to denote children in the Epistles. Similar to the Gentile world in the Jewish society too the common perception of children and with gradual differences also the youth was that they were irrational, “mentally deficient and ignorant; they spoke nonsense and failed to think and plan rationally; they were capricious, foolish, and quarrelsome.” See Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest: Children in the New Testament,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 34. To call in these times a Jew a boy was “one of the ultimate insults.” See Thomas Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 22. There are in fact several biblical references that reflect such a rather negative attitude concerning the child respectively the youth in the Old Testament (e.g., Prov 22:15; Eccl 10:16; Isa 3:4, 12) as well as in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor 3:1, 13:11, 14:20; Gal 4:1, 3; Eph 4:14; Heb 5:13). These passages reflect real attitude and are not just to be understood in a metaphorical way. Thus, according to Paul childhood could be characterized as a stage of immaturity that the person of faith must leave behind. The same attitude is reflected in other Jewish writings and the rabbinic tradition as well (see, for e.g., Wis 12:24-25, 15:14; Sir 30:1-13). Rabbis did not want to be associated in any way with children or childlike behavior. That’s beneath them. In rabbinic literature we therefore find passages that explicitly separate the rabbi from a child. So, it is said that “the nature of the rabbi is not at all childlike.” See A. Oepke, “pais,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 5:646. Oepke cites Rabbi Dosa ben Archinos who said: “Morning sleep, mid-day wine, chattering with children and tarrying in places where men of the common people assemble, destroy a man” (ibid). A record of the low status of children can also be seen in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matt 18:21-35. Jesus quite naturally narrates that a king who advanced money to a servant who at the time of account settlement is unable to pay back the depth suggests selling the man together with his wife and his children. Although Jesus delineates a worst case scenario where the debtor itself should be sold, selling people especially children to amortize a depth was not unusual at that time. See Moses J. Finley, “Die Schuldnehmerkast,” in *Seminar: Die Entstehung der Antiken Klassengesellschaft*, ed. Hans G. Kippenberg (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), 195. Selling children just to make money was actually not unusual, at least in the broader Roman context, and according to Stegemann there was a special trade in children on the slave market. See Wolfgang Stegemann, “Lasset die Kinder zu mir kommen. Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte des Kinderevangeliums,” in *Traditionen der Befreiung. Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen*, vol. 1, “Methodische Zugänge,” ed. Willy Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann (München, Germany: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980), 120. Thus, Matt 18:25 indirectly gives a hint to this pagan practice in the time of Jesus. Despite the danger to over-interpret certain Gospel passages the low status and treatment of children is obvious not only in pagan cultures but also in the Jewish context. In fact, the not counting of women and children, as Matthew points out (Matt 14:21), can be seen as an allusion of the actual social status of women and especially children—they just did not count. See Stephen C. Barton, “Child, Children,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 100.
to children (see Mark 10:13-16; Matt 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17). That Jesus makes children models of entering the Reign of God is more than just a metaphorical statement. He actually means it. Further, when he teaches about receiving children as the mark of true greatness he “places children at the center of the community’s attention as prime objects of its love and service, and requires of all who would be great in the community to serve children.” 

Therefore, Jesus calls the disciples not to rebuke but to welcome children as he does and turns the service of children into a sign of greatness. He even equates welcoming and receiving a child to welcoming and receiving himself and the Father who sent him (see Mark 9:33-37; Matt 18:1-6; Luke 9:46-48).

Jesus further affirms that children or teenagers can have genuine faith, true insight, and do praise God (see Matt 21:15-16). There is no reason at all to hinder children to come to God’s presence or to see them as less worthy. Such an attitude rather provokes Jesus’ severe anger and he harshly condemns all who cause children to stumble. The Gospel record suggests that children are represented by angels, which are in the direct presence of the Father (see Matt 18:10).

Jesus calls youthful disciples

Jesus did not hesitate to call adolescents into his circle of disciples and friends thus entrusting them with the building of his church and with the witness of the Gospel to be carried into the world. In the Jewish context of the mathetes it is more than likely

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34Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest,” 44.

35See Volume 2, Appendix D for a more detailed discussion.
that many of the disciples were, at least from today’s point of view, rather adolescents than grown-up adults. This would further support the idea that God does not hesitate to call young people into his service and entrust them with high responsibility in the building of his kingdom while not leaving them by their own and continually training them. In a similar way Dean Borgman concludes: “Jesus’ selection of some relatively young people to be the leaders of his church points to his trust in youthful potential.”

Where have the young people gone?

The book of Acts is virtually devoid of the presence of children and youth although Luke is its narrator who provided together with the other synoptics a children-rich account in his gospel. “Since it is the New Testament’s only narrative account of the character and mission of the fledging church, we might be disappointed by how little it has to offer on the subject of children and childhood.” Apart from three references to a parent-child relation (see Acts 12:12, 16:1, 21:9), and an approvingly information (see Acts 21:5) that at Tyre there were Christians with wives and children (teknon) there are just a few rather incidental notes on young people like Rhoda, John Mark, Timothy, Eutychus and Paul’s nephew.

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38 In Acts 12:13-15 appears Rhoda, a “slave-girl” who was so excited about the miraculously rescued Peter standing at the door that she forgot to open it. This could be a typical teenage reaction but, of course, in such a situation this could happen to anyone.

39 Eutychus comes across the reader of Acts during Paul’s farewell speech at Troas (see Acts 20:7-12). The young man sitting in a window on the third floor (v. 9: neanias; v. 12: paida) did not only fall asleep during the long speech but he fell down to the ground and was dead. Paul finally miraculously raised him from the death. The fact that Eutychus climbed to a window on the third floor may indicate that he was
Adult mentors and the potential of youth

Mark\textsuperscript{41} and Timothy\textsuperscript{42} are youth that highlight the importance that the youthful potential also needs adult mentoring. Since there were significant adult mentors in their lives both have become pillars of the early church. According to the early church tradition Mark later became the interpreter of Peter (see 1 Pet 5:13) and finally the author of the Gospel of Mark.\textsuperscript{43} It is very likely, that Timothy became a coworker of Paul and finally a leader of the church shortly after his teenage years.\textsuperscript{44} Again, there is evidence of a teenager. Although he died during a sermon he came back to live through the care and intercession of a church member who “put his arms around him” (Acts 20:10). The story might suggest that young people would suffer less when the church gives them a center place in worship and knows how to address their needs. However, falling in the midst of a caring community can safe the life of a youth.

There is a young man (\textit{neaniskon}) who happens to be the nephew of Paul (see Acts 23:16-22). He courageously intervenes in order to prevent a plot against Paul’s life.

Mark’s mother was a person of substance among the early Christians at Jerusalem. Her house seemed to be a meeting place of the primitive church (see Acts 12:12-17). Although there is no textual allusion to the age of John, also called Mark, from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12.25; 15:37), he seemed to be a rather young and inexperienced lad at that time he accompanied Paul and Barnabas during their first mission trip (Acts 13:5). It seems that Mark had been overstrained by the experiences of the mission trip with the two apostles. Anyway, Mark deserted the two and did not continue to work together with Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:38). However, when the time came for a second missionary trip Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance but Paul protested. Apparently Paul complained about the young man’s lacking perseverance and interpreted Mark’s decision as a failure. The two apostles had such a sharp disagreement that ultimately they parted company and went in separate directions (Acts 15:39-41). Paul took with him Silas but Barnabas did not give up on Mark. As he was Paul’s advocate and mentor when for the first time he joined the brethren at Jerusalem (see Acts 9:26-30) Barnabas now cared for Mark and took the youth under his wing (Acts 15:39b). It seems that Mark has been Barnabas’ cousin (see 1 Col 4:10). After all, even Paul learned to appreciate and value the help of Mark (see 2 Tim 4:11) owing to Barnabas who saw the potential of Mark and had the patience to continually encourage and mentor the young man.

Timothy first appears in Acts 16:1. He was the son of a Jewish and believing mother and a Greek, unbelieving father. Timothy was highly regarded among his fellow Christians. Apparently Timothy was converted when Paul and Barnabas visited Lystra on their first mission trip (Acts 14:8-19). Therefore, Paul later refers to Timothy as his true child in the faith (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2). Anyway, when Paul passed through the region a second time he selected Timothy to accompany him.


Timothy turned out to be Paul’s closest companion and Paul is full of praise of Timothy with whom together he worked like a father with his son (see Phil 2:19-23). That Paul compared the working condition to be as that of a father to a son may indicate that Timothy was considerably younger than Paul. In fact, in his first letter to Timothy Paul referred to the youth of Timothy saying that he as a leader in the 25
the fact that young leaders mentored by more experienced adults are a successful model for the Christian church.

Children and youth in the epistles

Similar as the book of Acts, also the Epistles as a whole, and specifically Paul has “little to say” on children and youth. Much of the exiguous material about actual children does not really exceed conventional attitudes. Concrete and direct references to children and youth are found in Paul’s household codes “that fit well into the pagan and Jewish context of early Christianity” since they share parallels in form and content with contemporary literature. Here Paul generally confirms that children (teknon) are subordinate to their parents and called to obey them in everything since that is their acceptable duty “in the Lord” (Col 3:20). That the duty is “in the Lord” places obedience

church should not let anyone look down on him because of his “youth” (1 Tim 4:12; neótētos) and that he should treat younger men and women as brothers and sisters but older men as fathers (1 Tim 5:1-2). Although the exact dating of the epistle is somewhat difficult (see Guthrie, 651-652) several years must have past since the time when Timothy joined Paul on his second mission trip—but years later, Paul still regarded Timothy as a youth.


46Balla, The Child-Parent Relationship, 174. Household codes are a series of commands aimed at different relationship pairs such as husband-wife, master-slave, and parent-child, with the intention to ensure appropriate behavior and attitudes in all roles. Similar household codes are found in Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish writings and they became quite prominent in early Christian discourses. For a discussion of the household codes see Balla, 165-178. Margaret Y. MacDonald, “A Place of Belonging: Perspectives on Children from Colossians and Ephesians,” in Bunge, The Child in the Bible, 280-288. Also Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest,” 54.

47The fact that Paul is directly addressing the children assumes that they were present in the congregation and old enough to understand it. The range of age that is in view can be from small children to young adults. See Ernest Best, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Publishers, 1998), 563.
believing parent(s) and thus a valued member of the Christian community. Paul also reminds young and old to have a respectful and decent interaction with each other, which suggests that generational conflicts were not absent, neither in the general society nor in the Christian community.

Although Paul "very rarely mentions real, living children" or youth he sees them as members of the community of believers, sometimes more implied than specifically mentioned. Nevertheless, he hardly adopts and sets forth Jesus’ teaching on children nor does he explore the child as model for entering the kingdom. While Paul’s interest is focussed on the children’s relationship to parents as a model of the relationship between church members and leaders Jesus’ interest in the child as model was of another kind.

A rather interesting reference to children is made by Paul in an argument about divorce respectively about Christians divorcing non-Christian spouses in his first letter to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 7:10-16). Paul argues (see 1 Cor 7:14) that children in a mixed marriage, where only one of the partners is a Christian, are not “unclean” but “holy” (hagioi). The child’s holiness is granted by the believing parent as well as the holiness of the unbelieving parent. In this context holiness, of the child as well as that of the unbelieving parent, is not to be understood in ethical terms nor is it to be equalized with being saved per se. Rather Paul declares that children of believers—even if only one parent is a Christian—are consecrated to God. He seems to believe “that God works out the consecration and salvation of these children through the familial bond with the believing parent.” Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest,” 52. Holiness here is based on relationship to the believing parent rather than on personal faith. However, in no way is Paul here referring to a sinless state or nature of the child. However, this reference also indicates that in the eyes of Paul children were valued members of the Christian community. See Strange, Children in the Early Church, 71-72.

There are some references where Paul addresses young men (neaniskoi, neoterous) and young women (parthenoi, neoteras). The respective Greek terms are not very specific and can even denote an age of forty or more but they may denote adolescents too. In 1 Tim 5:1-2 Paul just calls for a respectful and decent interaction between older and younger men and women and in Titus 2:2-8 Paul suggests to Titus some admonishing words to advise old and young women and men. However, these references (also 1 Pet 5:5, see below) are not specifically addressed to youth but they imply that generational tensions were not unknown in the context of the early church communities and families.


the teachings of Jesus about children as "co-recipients and model entrants" of God's Kingdom or as people with divine insight as well as representatives of God. The Epistles argue on familiar ground when they emphasize children as subordinate to parents and highlight the parents' duty to raise the children well, especially regarding obedience, good manners, and Christian formation. Strange puts it this way:

The writers of the New Testament letters used the image of the child in their description of discipleship in much more conventional ways. For them, children were persons under the authority of parents, ready examples of immaturity and of potential for growth. All of these are quite legitimate ways of viewing children, but each one corresponds to the accepted perception of the children in society, rather than, as with Jesus, challenging that perception.

The Sociohistorical Framework of Youth

Every adult knows youth fades. Quite different from the fact of our gender, what we all have—the one or the other—or belonging to a certain group of people, what we all do, youth is as a part of our life temporary. Where it starts, and where it ends, remains fluid. After all, youth is experienced and this experience is individual. However, besides the fact that youth must be understood in individual terms it has also to be seen as a historical and social phenomenon that similar to the individual experience is in a constant flux. Youth as a distinct stage of life is a variable construct depending on many socio-cultural factors. Thus, youth cannot just be a universal and clearly defined sociological or anthropological box in which everybody with a matching age just fits in regardless of time and culture. Actually, the general perception of youth or the age of adolescence in the Western world today is a rather new sociological factor.

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63 Strange, Children in the Early Church, 69. See also Balla, The Child-Parent Relationship, 198.
Nevertheless, youth, as a “transition period from childhood to adulthood,” can generally be characterized by some common or even universal features. Regarding biological and psychological criteria youth has ever been marked by physiological maturation and changes like the development of secondary sexual characteristics during puberty and changed ways of thinking that foster the adolescents’ new interest in and orientation toward their surrounding world. Such changes also affect the ways in which other people respond to the young person. Also legal and civic criteria are influencing and constituting the age of youth like the definition of maturity, civic and military duties, the legislation of marriage, the right to trade or hold an office, and so forth, led throughout time and in different cultures to certain differentiations of the childhood and the awareness of youth. Finally, there are also socio-economic criteria. “Being situated somewhere between the shifting margins of infantile dependency and adult autonomy” the liminal nature of youth is less designated by a certain age range than by the process of disengagement from parental care and reaching material and economic independence. In order to be socialized into major adulthood young people have also to develop skills and knowledge that make them fit into the working environment. Despite the fact that these are common features of youth they are culturally shaped and determined by the respective society and its philosophical approaches to and views of childhood and youth.

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within the larger context of one’s relationship to Jesus.\footnote{Peter Müller, *In der Mitte der Gemeinde: Kinder im Neuen Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1992), 268.} Paul reminds fathers also to take seriously their responsibility to bring their children and youth up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord\footnote{Since, according to Eph 5:21 (which serves like as a preface to the household code), parents and children are both called to act in submission to one another “out of reverence for Christ” they both stand alongside under the authority of Jesus Christ. A relationship to Jesus does in any case, whether children or parents are believers, or both, affect the parent-child relation. Obedience is also in accordance with the Ten Commandments, actually with “the first commandment with a promise” (Eph 6:1-3). On the other hand fathers should not provoke or embitter their children (Eph 6:4a; Col 3:21). Whereas children owe respect and obedience to their parents as their duty the parents owe their children the duty of thoughtfulness. This may be seen as a rather progressive statement in the culture of that time “where a far more one-way relationship would be the norm.” Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, 74. Nevertheless, Paul is quite attuned with his progressive pagan and Jewish contemporaries. The abuse of paternal authority in Antiquity has already brought forth pleas for moderation by several other Roman and Jewish writers. See Odd Magne Bakke, *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, trans. Brian McNeal (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 39-40; and Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest,” 54.} that reflects also the general attitude in Judaism (Eph 6:4b) as well as the basic concern in the Church during the patristic period and medieval times.\footnote{See Volume 2, Appendix G.} Having respectful and submissive children may qualify a man as a possible candidate for leadership in the church.\footnote{Leadership in the church is according to Paul a quality that is connected to the raising of children.} On the other hand the letters to Timothy are reference that also young people could claim leadership in the church. Paul bolsters his young co-worker by stating that he should not “let anybody look down” on him because of his youth (1 Tim 4:12). Paul also claims that a child is holy and sanctified by its
What the reader of Paul’s writing about children finds “is closer to the current view”\(^{57}\) than to the “radicalness of Jesus’ teaching on children.”\(^{58}\)

However, despite some references to actual children and youth the child mostly appears as a human category in all of the Epistles and thus most of the references in the Epistles that relate to children or childhood are metaphorical and references to youth are rather negative. This applies to Paul\(^{59}\) as well as to Peter\(^{60}\) and John.\(^{61}\)

However, in the Epistles there is hardly any further reflection on children and on

\(^{57}\)Oepke, “Pais,” 649.

\(^{58}\)Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest,” 60.

\(^{59}\)From the references that specifically speak metaphorically of children just one has a positive connotation of a child characteristic, actually an allusion to the innocence of the child (see 1 Cor 14:20), but the negative allusion most prominent with Paul is in the same verse too, “stop thinking like little children.” Paul seems to contrast mature reflection with childish emotionality (see Müller, \textit{In der Mitte der Gemeinde}, 297-298). Paul usually sees in the child immaturity (see 1 Cor 3:1, 13:11, 14:20a; Gal 4:1.3; Eph 4:14; Heb 5:13) “in the sense of inferiority” (Oepke, “Pais,” 649). Concerning youth Paul makes a statement that reveals a rather negative perception of the age of youth as well. He warns Timothy to “flee the evil desires of youth.” These desires are not further specified but in the course of his argument Paul specifies what Timothy should strive for, namely “righteousness, faith, love and peace.” Taken the opposite the evil desires are thus unrighteousness or disobedience, faithlessness, selfishness and seeking the thrill of conflict. However, it seems that Paul’s perception of youth was quite similar to that of his time. As a relational metaphor Paul also denotes the addressee of his letters or co-workers several times as children, even as his own children (e.g. 1 Cor 4:14-17; 2 Cor 12:14-15; Gal 4:19; 1 Thess 2:7). And of course the metaphor “children of God” is prominent too in Paul’s writing (e.g., Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:26, 29, 4:4-7). For a more profound analysis of the rich metaphorical language related to children used by Paul, see Aasgaard, “Like a Child,” 249-277.

\(^{60}\)Quite in line with the common expectation towards children Peter in his first letter reminds his readers to be obedient children (1 Pet 1:14). Like newborn babies Christians should “crave for pure spiritual milk” (1 Pet 2:2). Not the baby as such is here an example but its “insatiable appetite.” Strange, \textit{Children in the Early Church}, 69. Although Peter has specific words of exhortation for slaves (1 Pet 2:18-25), wives and husbands (1 Pet 3:1-7), and elders (1 Pet 5:1-4), there are none concerning youth or children. The \textit{neoteroi} in 1 Pet 5:5 that are called to be submissive to the older men are not to be seen in particular as youth. Rather Peter’s call is in line with Paul’s admonishing words regarding the respectful relationship between the generations.

\(^{61}\)John confines himself solely to a metaphorical usage of the child and there is not one reference to youth. His specific accentuation of relationship is also expressed by his preference of the terms like “child,” “little children,” “children of God,” to denote followers of Jesus as people who belong to God respectively fellow church members (see 1 John 2:12-14, 18, 28; 3:1-2, 18; 4:4; 5:21; 2 John 1, 4, 13). The exception is the term “children of the devil” as counterpart to the “children of God” in 1 John 3:10.
The End of Childhood and the Beginning of Adulthood

Ancient societies saw human development generally as a lifelong process which can be described by several stages with its climax in old age. However, although there was some differentiation officially there was no specific age of youth in ancient times. Puberty as an objective incident in the human life marked the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. Nevertheless, it was common to see the time after puberty to about twenty or even twenty-five years as a further step and transition to full maturity and civic status. This time of transition, in Greece the ephebe, was even marked by several specific legislations. However, such a youth-like status was only a phenomenon of the upper-class and urban society at that time.

Despite the fact that there was officially no specific life phase designated to youth ancient societies obviously recognized that youth and young adults are peculiar. On one hand young adulthood or the time of youth was seen by many as one of the best times of life ancient societies, on the other hand, also often attributed rather negative characteristics to young people and mocked about their behaviors.

Similar to the Roman Law also in the Greek as well as in the Jewish society a youth reached the status of adulthood or legal majority in two steps. First with the public acknowledgement of having reached puberty around the age of about twelve to fourteen and second with the obligation but also granting of full legal capacity with twenty respectively twenty-five years of age. This is an interesting observation since it suggests that already in ancient times the peculiarity of youth has been recognized in society and that something like youth actually existed. However, children and youth somehow

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66 See Volume 2, Appendix F for a detailed discussion.
vanish in the gathering darkness of the emerging Middle Age.

Medieval societies did not pay much attention to children or teenagers. The general ancient, especially Greek perceptions of childhood (lacking logos and thus being not yet truly human)\(^6\)\(^7\) were still widely accepted. Contrary to ancient times in the Middle Age puberty was hardly celebrated with a specific rite de passage to indicate the beginning of adulthood. At the beginning of the fifth century a rather negative view of the child and of youth was further enforced with Augustine and a pessimistic anthropology.\(^6\)\(^8\) Thus, the general perception of the youth in the context of the medieval church was rather negative. The adolescent is threatened and entrained by all sorts of dangerous stimuli and fervors. Therefore early marriage was fostered and the status of marriage actually marked the end of childhood respectively youth.

However, with the rediscovery of the Roman law the majority threshold raised to 18 and in late medieval times even to 22 or 25. There have been some legislations regarding youth (for instance, trading restrictions) that indicate that in some aspects of the social life young people as “full-sized immature adults”\(^6\)\(^9\) have been treated differently than other adults. Nevertheless, as soon as the child could live without the constant care he or she belonged to the adult society and was commonly seen as a miniature version of an adult. Children grew up among adults and the social stratum they were born into and quite early in life they worked with them. Family bonds were not that intense compared

\(^6\)See Volume 2, Appendix E for a detailed discussion.

\(^6\)See Bakke, *When Children Became People*, 105 and 281. For a detailed discussion see Volume 2, Appendix G.

with modern societies. Generally speaking, in the medieval society a child immediately passed from childhood to adulthood and adolescence or youth as a time of transition from childhood to adulthood was hardly socially recognized.

The Rise of Adolescence

With Modernity and the industrialization around AD 1850 a process of profound social changes takes its course that creates new social systems and structures and that affects the status and perception of the family. The nuclear family enters the world stage and is more and more organized around children. The bond of parent-child affection gets central as well as a new awareness of specific pedagogical responsibility. The education of their children becomes a central parental concern and the school becomes the central mean of education and preparation for the working life, which on the other hand more and more isolates children and teens from the life of adults. Children are no longer mingled among adults and thus no longer get to know the adult world through a close contact with them and by being involved. With the prolongation of the schooldays and the implementation of the compulsory education begins a process of isolation or more positively put a process that provides a secure framework in order to prepare children and youth of all social stratams for the multifaceted tasks of a modern world. This marks a decisive step toward the differentiation of a new specific phase of life separated from childhood and from adulthood—the youth. First it was a matter of a few years in the life cycle but due to a continuing prolongation of the time span the age of

70 See Volume 2, Appendix H for a more detailed discussion.
youth encompasses today fifteen to twenty years. The process of the segregation of the generations continues and will lead to a further prolongation of the phase of youth and a further emphasis of this life span.

In the post-war societies of the Western World the adolescent teenager formed a new societal group of people and cultural force that called for special attention. “Isolated in schools, not needed by their families, and preyed upon the market, teenagers became a phenomenon of concern for adult society.” Although the time span and the characteristics of youth as a distinct phase of life can be seen as socially and culturally shaped the adolescent is not just a product of culture. Adolescents are also agents of culture.

Youth—A Socio-Cultural Force

Although the life phase of youth can be seen as a culturally determined social category adolescent themselves are not just a product of socio-cultural forces. They are also active agents of culture. In order to develop their own identity to become autonomous individuals adolescents have to culturally respond to the society within they are expected to acquire responsibilities and to become part of. By doing that young people do not just adapt to the adult culture but also respond to it thus inventing their own cultural niches. Therefore, youth cultures basically represent young people’s responses to the changing world and the adult society and are unique ways of explaining and

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73 See Volume 2, Appendix 1 for a more detailed discussion.
communicating their own experiences. For many adolescents subcultures are a means to create and establish an identity within a society that makes it difficult to locate a sense of self. Historically, specific youth subcultures emerge collaterally with the growing life span youth in the post-war period and in the context of the post-war social changes.

The increased importance of the market and consumption in society give also way to a specific youth market as well as the growth of a youth-oriented leisure industry and mass media. Finally, the segregation of the culture is part of a new process of social segregation in the post-war period. A growing separation of youth from the adult life, the acceleration of cultural and technical inventions and developments as well as the socio-political and economic turmoil and the growing influence of the mass media foster the generational segregation. Cultural differences between the youth and the adult generations, thus, increased due to rapid socio-cultural changes in the western society.

In this context of constant change generational differences and specific population cohorts emerge since individuals with similar years of birth also share a common set of developmental experiences that are affected by social and cultural experiences and a distinct set of values that differ from the previous generation. The identification of various birth cohorts (like Builders, Boomers, Busters or Generation X, Millennials, etc.) are helping to understand shifts in culture and values. In order to reach youth and successfully communicate with them a sensitivity and understanding for their age cohort and actual cultural context is required. The proclamation of the everlasting Gospel to youth therefore also requires the contextualization of both the message as well as the messenger.

Although many subcultural developments generally lose interest and influence
and eventually fade while young people enter adulthood many of the cultural resources originally created by young people prevail and become part of the dominant culture or even lead to cultural change. In fact, young people do not just have the potential to become agents of social and cultural change in the future, they actually are dynamic agents in the presence. It is even evident that spiritual and religious commitments are important factors in young people’s contributing to—and sometimes leading—social change. It is also evident that adolescents do not just belong to the most receptive groups of society especially for religious change and conversion but that a positive associated religious or spiritual identity and a faith commitment among youth may affect society positively and even foster cultural change.

**The Socio-psychological Framework of Youth**

The “social invention” of adolescence in the modern age is not without effect on the biological and psychological development of young people today. Socio-historical factors as well as biological and socio-psychological factors are interwoven and interrelated. Adolescence is not just a historical or socio-cultural phenomenon it is as much a biological and psychological phenomenon initiated with pubescence and manifest by obvious physiological changes between about 12 to 18 years. The obvious physical, biological, and psychic maturation in adolescence also affect the feedback and relational as well as behavioral patterns within the social system of a youth, which in turn also affects the youth' behavior and self-concept. Thus, the psychological development of youth is not an independent process; it is rather always socio-psychological and systemic.

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The psychic or mental maturation during adolescence is thus more than just an accompaniment of a mere biological process it is also affected and dependent on societal circumstances.\textsuperscript{75} The acceleration of menarche for instance, though a biological process, happens to be influenced by socio-cultural changes in the last century.

The culturally and socially caused prolongation of the adolescence in western societies has also led to an even further differentiation of the age of adolescence and its developmental tasks. Although development is a life-long process there is hardly any other time in life when developmental changes are so profound and obvious as during adolescence.

Science Detects Adolescence

Adolescence can be seen as a specific time of transition from childhood to adulthood and there are several general developmental processes that define and constitute this life period.\textsuperscript{76} The onset of adolescence is not only characterized by physiological maturation but also by the development of new ways of thinking. Both of which provide a basis for the individual’s new orientation toward and interest in their social world and both of which also influence the ways in which others, such as parents and peers view and respond to them. The adolescent is faced with many challenges, demands, and problems related to their developmental tasks (specified for instance by Havinghurst).\textsuperscript{77} The complexity of the developmental fields, forces, and tasks in


\textsuperscript{76}See Volume 2, Appendix J for a more detailed discussion and description of developmental theories and their implications for adolescence.

\textsuperscript{77}See Volume 2, Appendix J.
adolescence is also reflected by the various models, theories, and attempts to understand, clarify, and prescribe this phase of life in the realm of psychology.

Inspired by Darwin the father of adolescent psychology, G. Stanley Hall, understood human development in the context of a biogenetic process, which recapitulates the evolution of the species. Adolescence as a new birth marks the transition from a rather animal-like status to the human race through a time of storm and stress. The adolescent struggle between self-focus and social conscience helps the youth to get to know himself and find his destiny. Hall postulated a moratorium for the adolescent to shelter and protect the youth from the challenges of adult and especially urban life thus giving scientific reason and a psychological rationale for early youth ministries. Hall consolidated the paradigm of adolescence as an independent and psychologically characterized phase of development and opened the door to the scientific discussion about adolescence.

The biological approach of Hall and others assumed that physiological factors are responsible for the psychological development and that the adolescent experience is universal and uniform. Such an understanding has been challenged by sozio-cultural theories of adolescence. Cultural anthropologists have shown that the specific adolescent phenomena may vary from culture to culture. Whereas in non-stressful or postfigurative cultures (like in preindustrial societies) the transition from childhood to adulthood happens rather gradually and continuously in stressful or prefigurative cultures (like in today's Western societies) with a postponed change to adult status and with prolonged conditions of non-responsibilities adolescence is more complicated and marked by periods of conflict. The adolescent experience and the process of the adolescent
development are not just shaped by mere universal biological factors but inasmuch by cultures and social contexts. The socio-cultural approach thus highlights the significance of the environmental and cultural factors regarding adolescent development.

Such factors play a rather minor or even insignificant role in the psychoanalytic view of adolescence. The psychic development of the adolescent is according to Freud marked by a change of object in the libido that initiates the emancipation from parental fixation and authority. Caused by biological forces the adolescent is in a time of internal conflicts and turmoil. Adolescence must be a stressful period for the healthy development youth otherwise a reluctance to mature by mere submissiveness and conformity is to assume. During adolescence also the ‘ego ideal’ is formed which may become the leading life motive the individual’s ego measures against and aspires to.

In the context of Freudian theory Blos has further detailed the life phase of adolescence by focusing on the adolescent character formation through the second individuation process (distancing from the parents and redefining the child-parent relation).78 Thereby Blos cautions against any influences that try to shorten or hasten this individuation process. Adolescent development needs time and that should be respected.

Developmental Theories

The specific developmental processes that an adolescent is going through are further specified and highlighted by the developmental stage theorists who assume an epigenetic concept of maturation with universal principles and invariant sequences of developmental stages. Piaget focused on the cognitive development, which reaches

78See Volume 2, Appendix J.
during adolescence the formal operational stage where the youth develops the capacity to think systematically, hypothetically, and in purely abstract and self-reflective ways. Through this stage the youth enters a broader world and adolescence is according to Piaget the metaphysical age par excellence since the youth’s thinking is especially concerned with questions about meaning, God, and the world. It is therefore not a surprise that also Kohlberg identified adolescence as the crucial age in the development of moral reasoning. In order to leave the conformism of the conventional stage behind and move to the postconventional or autonomous level the youth has to become capable to base his moral reasoning on universal ethnical principles that could be provided by religion. However, Kohlberg identifies adolescence as a period of growth for moral and pro-social dispositions, cognitions, and behaviors.

By putting more emphasis on social environmental than on mere cognitive and internal factors Erikson established for the first time a concept of identity development.

In a system of several identity formational stages based on crisis he also identified adolescence as the most crucial period since it is during this time that basic interpersonal and vocational structures for adult life are shaped. During the stage of identity versus role confusion adolescence is marked by a psychosocial identity crisis and a psychosocial moratorium initiated by pubescence. Its task is to establish a new sense of ego identity that enables the adolescent to find his place in the larger social context and order. Thereby the youth often experiments with different roles especially among his peers and is explicitly dependent on social feedback. Additionally the youth is searching for or exploring meaningful identity commitments in order to generate a self concept that links past, present, and the future together. Erikson reminds that in the formation of a personal
philosophy of life which is sustainable and which provides orientation the parental generation is responsible to provide a meaningful ideological framework.

The process of identity formation during adolescence provides the basis upon which the young person can move forward into adulthood and base his adult life. It is hardly possible to successfully cope with the major tasks of adulthood like developing intimate relationships with others, caring for a future generation, and mastering the challenges of one's life without a clear sense of identity. However, since the youth's life concept or their adult life concept is no longer just determined by origin, social status and family economy and fostered by a general decline of community, social and ethical traditions, clear values and guidelines the defining of self and of one's identity has become more and more a normative task of adolescence. The identity formation is thus a very vital field in the psychological research of adolescence.

Identity Development: Commitment and Meaning-Making

By focusing on crisis and commitment as the two major variables in the identity formation Marcia has identified and prescribed four different identity statuses which underline the importance of an active self-exploration during adolescence and the need to make meaningful commitments. According to Marcia a successful process of identity formation is marked by the status of identity achievement respectively when the youth has experienced an extensive period of soul-searching prior to making identity-defining values and commitments (which includes religious beliefs).

79 See Volume 2, Appendix J.
That ego or identity development happens in the context of the individual’s search for coherent meaning is stressed by Loevinger and Kegan. Whereas Loevinger rather focuses on the cognitive processes and on being proactive to become more self-aware, Robert Kegan is stressing the importance of meaning-making in the context and interplay of cognitive and affective growth. Identity formation is going through a process of organizing and meaning-making during which the individual has to establish a relative balance between the self and the other. According to Kegan the adolescents are gradually making meaning of the world from the interpersonal balance, which means the affiliation with significant others in the teenage years to the institutional balance or the affiliation with social and cultural institutions in mid-adolescence with the goal to reach an interindividual balance in the adult self.

Narrative Psychology and Adolescence

The importance of the linking together of past, present, and the future for the identity formation, identified by Erikson, and the process of meaning-making stressed by Loevinger and Kegan finds strong support by narrative psychology. Narrative psychology links adolescence with the creating of a life story. Thereby it is stressing the fact that the problem of adolescent identity formation (as McAdams says) is the problem of arriving at a life story that provides unity and purpose for the self and that makes sense. It is also stressing the fact that the creating of a coherent life story always happens “within a sociohistorical matrix that embodies a much larger story.”

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80 Ibid.
adolescent identity formation is explicitly a psychosocial process and thus not only involves but actually needs parameters and meta-narratives provided by significant people and societal entities (which includes the Christian church).

Adolescence in the Light of Field Theory and Social Systems

The understanding that the creating of a coherent life story is crucial for the adolescent identity development and dependent on ideological as well as relational resources provided by social contexts underlines the fact that adolescent development occurs in a systemic context. This insight is further established by psycho-social approaches. Kurt Lewin, for instance, sees the adolescent experience as being especially shaped and influenced by the respective socio-cultural background, the psychological field respectively the youth’s life space. Lewin’s field theory characterizes adolescence as a time of complex changes in the life space and as a life span of transition respectively a process of change of group membership that leaves the youth in a state of social locomotion. The youth enters a cognitively unstructured field that leads to relative uncertainty of behavior and leaves him or her open to constructive guidance. The plasticity of personality during adolescence can lead to positive personality changes, religious conversions but makes the youth also vulnerable to manipulation, seduction, and group pressure.

H. S. Sullivan is convinced that the self develops through the reflective appraisal of significant other persons and always happens in the context of interpersonal relationships. His reflections help to see that a successful adolescent development is dependent on healthy relationships with significant others. In a similar way Bandura assumes that behavioral changes during adolescence are primarily determined by social
or relational factors that operate within a particular interpersonal context, like family structures, school and other institutional settings, or peer groups. Social learning theory points to the fact that the modeling of significant others respectively the modeling forces of parents, institutions and social structures are much more decisive for inducing behavioral changes, especially during adolescence, than any teaching or directive technique.

In the course of the favoritism of environmental factors more complex models of human development emerged that focus on the systemic interaction between the person and the multiple contexts and ecologies (including culture, family, school, faith community, neighborhood, community, nation, etc.) in which the child or the adolescent is embedded. Like biological changes also social changes occur in the context of the larger ecological system. Bronfenbrenner has emphasized that the ecological context does not only influence the individual but the individual also influences the ecological field. The adolescent is rooted in various layers of social systems each of which influencing the development of the youth and in turn also influenced by the youth. Thus, it is emphasized that adolescent development happens in systemic contexts and systemic contexts shape development and vice versa. This reciprocal shaping is a continuous process that needs plasticity of the individual especially during adolescence. Lerner has pointed out that a successful outcome of the interaction between an adolescent and his context is dependent on the congruence or match between these two. Such a goodness-of-fit situation or mutual adaption—when the individual characteristics are compatible or congruent with the characteristics, demands or expectations of significant others—enhances according to Lerner the development and foster the adolescent thriving to ideal
adulthood and community involvement. Supportive communities play an active role in
the developmental process of interconnected youth, which results in the growth of
competence, confidence, connections, character, and compassion.

Faith Development and Conversion

Although there are many sources that attempt to influence people in this world,
there is scientific evidence that most fundamental and comprehensive changes in lives are
to be found in the context of religious conversion.\textsuperscript{82} It has also been shown that
adolescence is in fact "the most favorable time for religious conversion."\textsuperscript{83} All the most
influential identity theorists have identified adolescence as the most crucial life phase. In
a special way, youth test normative systems and have needs for meaning, identity,
definition, and belonging. A spiritual commitment to God and an ultimate concern as a
consequence of conversion can meet these needs of an adolescent in the context of a
Christian faith community.

Although there is of course an individual, intra-psychic dimension to the
conversion experience science has more and more taken into consideration that the
phenomenon of conversion has to be understood in a systemic context and as an interplay
between relational, communicational, and psychological processes. From a theological
point of view this fact does not neglect the importance of divine initiative and
intervention in Christian conversion but rather it points to the fact that generally the Holy
Spirit is working in the world and in someone’s culture as well as through human agents.

\textsuperscript{82}See Volume 2, Appendix K for a detailed discussion.

\textsuperscript{83}V. Bailey Gillespie, \textit{The Dynamics of Religious Conversion: Identity and Transformation}
It has been shown that an individual’s conversion to God usually does not just have a vertical dimension as if it were solely a matter between the person and God’s Spirit. A genuine conversion most often has a horizontal dimension too and involves relevant others. All socio-psychological theories of adolescence and identity formation agree that the extension and establishment of mutual interpersonal relationships to significant others during adolescence is a crucial developmental factor. Therefore it applies especially to adolescents when empirical studies conclude that conversions most likely occur when spiritually ‘seeking’ persons are connected to devout others and in the context of social networks. By referring to the extended social bonding process during adolescence Fowler already suggested adolescence to be the prime time of faith development and of finding meaning in an interpersonal concept of a loving, accepting, and supporting God (see above). Therefore, the experience of Christian community and the youth’s involvement in the congregation as well as in various forms of Christian youth ministry that provide possibilities to connect peers and to relate to authentic and relevant adults in a socio-spiritual context are crucial regarding adolescent conversion. Eventually, as Michael Warren said, young people “are looking for the signs of transformation in the very persons and communities that would call them to transformation.”

The traditional paradigm of a sudden, crisis-driven conversion and as a change of self has been challenged, modified and amended by a more complex view of conversion that stresses more a gradual process and the context of conversion. However, the biblical

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concept of conversion supports the process paradigm since conversion is not just to be seen as an immediate experience or event but rather as the result of an encounter with Jesus that happens “within” the individual as an intrapersonal process caused by the Holy Spirit (see also Acts 2:37) and includes a succession of insight, turning and transformation.\textsuperscript{85}

Helping adolescents to find their own encounter with Jesus is not only supported by a missionary responsibility but also by the socio-psychological observation that the conversion in adolescence is generally associated with positive effects for the youth as well as for his or her social context. Further, the importance to focus the evangelistic endeavor especially on adolescents is additionally stressed by the fact that “both apostasy and conversion are primarily phenomena of youth.”\textsuperscript{86} Therefore, a church committed to authentically relate to young people, to live and narrate the story of salvation as well as to address specific and relevant spiritual and biblical issues to adolescents might prevent apostasy and foster conversion during the most crucial and receptive phase of life.

\textbf{Conclusion}

So far we explored biblical and theological aspects of childhood and youth as well as the sociohistorical and socio-psychological framework of adolescence. From all the information at hand it is no overstatement to denote adolescence or the time of youth as the most crucial life phases in the human life cycle and as the most important group of people to reach with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

\textsuperscript{85}See Volume 2, Appendix K.

Socialization Is the Primal Factor of Youth Evangelism

Before there was a child there were parents. It is thus in accordance with the order of creation that besides direct divine intervention the parents are the most important external influence regarding the socialization and the physical, psychical, social, and spiritual development of a child.\(^{87}\) The transmission of the Christian faith happens most naturally in the context of the "personal religious community" respectively the family.\(^{88}\) In ancient times the father was considered to be the primal teacher and priest of the children and the Bible gives ample evidence that religious education was specifically commissioned to the father respectively the parents. Parents are thus the primal agents and witness of faith and are "the single most important influence in the development of an adolescent's personality."\(^{89}\) The family, by creation, provides the best 'environment' for the development and transmission of faith since faith does hardly ever just happen or develop outside the context of caring and loving \textit{interpersonal relationships} and the transmission of faith usually happens best in the context of \textit{intergenerational community}. Every evangelistic or missional concept that ignores these basic aspects is in danger to fall short.

However, this is also true: Before there was a child there was sin. The first child has already been born into a world affected by the human fall. The family has right from the start its deficiencies and its history reveals that life disconnected from the creator can


go badly wrong despite good and faithful parents. A successful and healthy development is therefore more than just the fruit of good education. People are in desperate need of salvation and of being reconnected to God in order to finally find back to the human life God intended and created.

Since adolescence is the time when a young person begins to see the world with new eyes and actually becomes able to knit together past, present and future—due to cognitive development—the youth can now understand the story of his life as being part of the greater human story of sin and salvation. In a time of disillusionment (the parents are definitely no longer perfect, the world is getting more complicated), inner tensions, and identity formation adolescents need relational and ideological resources that help them to establish a belief system. To have a coherent belief systems is “central to characterizing the psychological self.” To say it in Christian terms, in order to establish a healthy belief system youth need to experience, hear, and understand the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Jesus, the narrative of Salvation, the biblical values and God’s prospect of life is not only generally but also specifically highly relevant for the psychic well being and development of the emerging adults during adolescence.

Since according to Blos adolescents are going through a second individuation process by distancing themselves from the parents in order to redefine their child-parent relation and since they need to master their childhood trauma young people need more agents of faith than just mom and dad. Since development, including spiritual or faith

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development, is a systemic process adolescence also need believing peers as well as significant Christian adults in order to finally find ‘owned faith’.

Following Bronfenbrenner the best context for a healthy spiritual development is given when the adolescent’s mesosystem contains various microsystems (face to face relationships at home, among peers, in the church, etc.) that are not divergent regarding values, beliefs and ethical standards and that are not marked by age segregation but by a variety of personal intergenerational relationships. In this respect the family but also the church family plays a crucial role in the spiritual development of an adolescent. Empirical evidence just confirms “that it does in fact matter for emerging adult religious outcomes whether or not youth have had nonparental adults in their religious congregations to whom they could turn for help and support. . . . Adult engagement with, role modeling for, and formation of youth simply matters a great deal for how they turn out after they leave the teenage years.”91

Therefore the caring and loving interpersonal relationships and the intergenerational community provided by both, the family as well as the church family are the basic relational and missional foundations for youth evangelism. God intended the nucleus family—constituted by creation—and the extended family (the Christian community, the covenant people)—constituted by salvation—to be the primal human institutions to help young people find their own faith and trusting relationship to their Heavenly Father. Every concept of youth evangelism thus has to see the family and the congregation as the most influential spiritual and social agents in the relational and

incarnational proclamation of the Good News and just to take into account “that much about emerging adults’ religious outcomes is explained by the elementary sociological principles of socialization.”

The family and the church family are thus the basic social institutions and socialization is the basic process of youth evangelism. According to Bandura’s social learning theory that identifies role models as being much more important for behavioral change than directives a relational and incarnational understanding of youth evangelism is not only theologically but sociologically supported. Basic to any youth evangelistic attempt is to understand that preaching or teaching the Gospel is just a contribution to the actual proclamation of the Good News that happens through interpersonal relationships and interactions with significant people of different generations over time.

The Growing Importance of the Extended Family

The Old Testament concept that puts belonging to the covenant people first in the lives of young people correspond with the identification of socialization as the basic process of youth evangelism.

In a society that increasingly isolates young people from the adult world and where traditional family concepts erode the church as extended family becomes more importance in this socialization process. Further, since we live in a “post-Christendom culture” most people do not ‘naturally’ find faith through the regular process of religious socialization, and even if young people are raised by Christian parents, they are

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92 Smith and Snell, Souls in Transition, 285.

still faced with the challenge to integrate and internalize a personal and autonomous faith in God while facing a society that does not support but rather question a biblical worldview and understanding of God. Young people therefore need to experience more than ever the Christian faith in the relational context of authentic people of different generations who incarnate The Truth and thus actually life the Gospel as a new society.

In this sense Bryan Stone says “that the most evangelistic thing a church can do today is to be the church . . . not merely in public but as a new and alternative public; not merely in society but as a new and distinct society . . . any evangelism for which the church is irrelevant, an afterthought, or instrumental cannot be Christian evangelism.”

In the context of the covenant people and by understanding the church as extended family a congregation is not just doing evangelism but finally it is evangelism. Youth evangelism then is not just an activity but a characteristic trait of the church as family of God.

The Growing Importance of the Life Phase of Youth

Reaching youth with the Gospel of Christ is the Church’s biggest challenge today. Youth as a distinct life phase in the human life cycle is a relatively new cultural and sociological phenomenon. A variety of socio-cultural and economic changes and developments like the separation of young people from the adult life, the concentration of the child’s ‘habitat’ to the nuclear family, the expansion and prolongation of the time of formal education, the clustering of young people to age-groups, have not only complicated social transformations during adolescence but the transition to fully achieved

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adulthood has also stretched out into an extended and often unstructured, amorphous, and confused life stage we call youth. It is the scientific consensus "that the transition to adulthood today is more complex, disjointed, and confusing than in past decades."\(^{95}\) Adolescence has become a state of "perpetual becoming."\(^{96}\)

The extension of the life phase of youth and the prolongation of the time of transition to adulthood has not come to an end yet. Besides the socio-cultural factors that foster this process there are also biological processes at work that widen the life span of youth. Since puberty seems to happen ever earlier youth also expands on the costs of a shortened childhood. Although it has to be differentiated the average time span of youth today is about sixteen years. The increase of the years of youth has also increased the quantity of young people living in this time of transition. Only by the mere fact that youth has become such a dominant life phase over the last century but also by the fact that youth has become a dominant shaper of our culture young people need to be seen as a primary group of people to reach with the Gospel of Christ.

Reaching People in Times of Transition and Significant Change

Rick Warren has answered the question regarding the most receptive people by saying: "I believe there are two broad categories: People in transition and people under tension."\(^{97}\) Research shows in fact that people seem to be much more receptive to the Gospel of Jesus Christ during times of significant change. Adolescents are in a time of

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\(^{97}\)Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 182.
transition and tension and change is one of the key characteristics of this life phase.

In fact, adolescence is the time when the developing youth goes through drastic changes in the physical, psychological (emotional and cognitive), social, and spiritual domains of life. "Adolescence," so Lynn Rew, "is a time of rapid change with far-reaching consequences."98 Besides the changes of physiological maturation and the development of new ways of thinking adolescence is "a time of acquisitions of skills and interests, occupational, educational, and interpersonal, that will be relied on into old age; and it is finally, the time of more lasting self definition, the working out of a sense of identity that will serve to organize experience and guide behavior through much of adulthood."99

During this crucial period of personality development and reorganizing of personality structure the youth is faced with many developmental tasks that will shape the life of the emerging adult. All the developmental and socio-psychological theories of adolescence have in common that they identify this life phase as being "a crucible"100 for the shaping of the future life in adulthood. It would be mere ignorance not to be present and actively involved with relational and ideological support during this period of time and not to put youth evangelism on top of the missional agenda of the church. The experience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, incarnated in the Body of Christ, as well as the understanding of the Word of God, proclaimed and contextualized, are paving the way


100Ibid.
for the ultimate resource for a healthy development during adolescence, a personal and genuine encounter with the Divine. In the light of all the scientific facts and theories about adolescence one is prone to ask with Ellen G. White: “Why should not labor for the youth in our borders be regarded as missionary work of the highest kind?”

However, the flipside of the psychological and social structural alterations and the manifold transitions youth are experiencing during adolescence is that the likelihood to abandon their adapted faith and to distance themselves from the church increases because both becomes no longer relevant to them. Smith and Snell say that “we have good reason to believe that the sheer plentitude of life transitions that emerging adults experience themselves has the tendency to lessen the frequency and importance of religious practices and potentially undercut established religious beliefs.” It may be too generalized to say that while young people are changing in an ongoing developmental process, the church is not. Anyway, studies about the reasons of church drop-out of young people reveal that it is less a question of losing their faith than a question of finding a spiritual home in their church. Roger Dudley has discovered that “the reason for leaving and staying away from the church is not doctrinal but relational.” This fact does not relativize the importance of the church as extended family to be involved in the lives of young people but rather highlight it.

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102Smith and Snell, Souls in Transition, 76.

103Roger L. Dudley, Why our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a 10-Year Study (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 99. See also page 39.
Youth Conversion in a Communal Context

Jean Piaget has designated the age of youth as the metaphysical age par excellence since by entering the stage of formal operational reasoning the youth’s thinking is especially concerned with questions about meaning, God, and the world. This corresponds with the claim of narrative psychology that sees the creating of a coherent life-story by bringing together past, present and future as the crucial process in identity formation during adolescence. The successful achievement of a life narrative is dependent on relational and ideological resources that must be provided by significant others and social institutions. Erikson has highlighted the fact that identity formation requires the responsibility of the parental generation to provide an ideological framework for the youth. The church family is thus called to help young people in their process of identity formation by sharing their life-stories and through that by witnessing the ultimate story of Jesus respectively the meta-story of salvation. Identity theorists have generally stated that religion may play an important role in the process of meaning-making and establishing a coherent value- and belief-system.

That the time of youth may be a specific time of religious conversion and decision-making can therefore be expected from a socio-psychological viewpoint. That it actually is the peak time of conversion and decision-making, which also includes apostasy, is supported by empirical studies. However, it has been shown that more than eighty percent of the adult Christians have taken their decision to follow Christ during the time of adolescence. In the same way it is the scientific consensus that adolescence is the time most associated with the experience of conversion. Therefore, for a church with a
high missional consciousness it seems rather natural to put youth evangelism on top of their agenda.\textsuperscript{104}

However, since conversion involves a change in social identity and must be seen as a process that is nurtured and fostered in the context of interpersonal relationships; and since youth are looking for the signs of transformation in the very persons and communities that would call them to transformation the local church, as extended family, is playing a vital role in the process of juvenile decision-making and in fostering a new life-commitment to Jesus. Evangelism, thus can be seen as a “communal practice.”\textsuperscript{105} Kallenberg says:

Because conversion involves a change in social identity, evangelism must be a corporate practice, executed by the community that is the source of the believer’s new identity. Second, because conversion involves the acquisition of a new conceptual language, evangelism must engage outsiders in conversations spoken in that language. Third, because conversion involves a paradigm shift, evangelism must seek to assist that shift by being dialogical in style and by, wherever possible, enlisting potential converts in the telling of the story.\textsuperscript{106}

For the youth it is very important to have a spiritual and social context in their mesosystem that can support and foster the faith developmental tasks and not to hinder them for instance by pushing youth toward conformity and uniformity or by providing no space for questions and personal thinking. In the Adventist context Ellen White already said more than a century ago: “It is the work of true education to develop this power, to

\textsuperscript{104}Facing the fact that most practicing Christian adults have made serious faith commitments in their youth it has been suggested that the church is also putting eighty percent of its missionary emphasis on adolescents. See, Brian D. McLaren, \textit{The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 139.

\textsuperscript{105}Brad J. Kallenberg, \textit{Live to Tell: Evangelism for a Postmodern Age} (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 47.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., 64.
train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought.”\textsuperscript{107}

From a youth evangelistic viewpoint it is very vital that the church family has a high thinking climate. This means that it can provide a save place for youth to wrestle with their questions about God and faith in the intergenerational context of people that have a personal faith-journey-story to tell. Westerhoff points into the same direction by stating that an actual space for Christian faith development is facilitated by “actions between and among faithful persons in an environment that supports the expansion of faith and equips persons for radical life in the world as followers of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{108} Eventually “faith is expressed, transformed, and made meaningful by persons sharing their faith in a historical, tradition-bearing community of faith.”\textsuperscript{109} And Eugene Roehlkepartain says:

“Youth, whose intellectual capacities are growing exponentially, need a setting where they are challenged to think and ask the tough questions about their faith. When the church provides this kind of environment it helps young people’s faith to blossom… Rather than undercutting faith (as many people may intuitively fear), a climate that stimulates tough thinking and hard questions actually stimulates a deeper and personal faith, not just a faith that has been inherited from parents and other adults.”\textsuperscript{110}

Youth evangelism, thus, is never just about presenting the right answers but more often about asking the right questions and sharing authentic life-stories of faith.

\textsuperscript{107}Ellen G. White, \textit{Education} (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 17.


\textsuperscript{109}Ibid, 19.

Spirituality Fosters Adolescent Well-Being and Thriving

Despite the fact that religion respective religious groups and unhealthy belief systems can have a negative influence on the developmental process of an adolescent (which often has been the socio-psychological focus in past decades) the opposite has become much more evident. The spiritual dimension of human development and the positive influence spirituality has on young people is no longer a taboo in science. It is an established socio-psychological observation that adolescent conversion and spirituality are generally associated with positive effects for the youth as well as for his or her social context.

King and Benson have concluded that “religion potentially offers an ideologically, sociologically, and spiritually rich context for identity formation. Religion is seen as affording a potent milieu for identity development through providing explicitly prosocial worldviews, values, and morals; fellow participants as models or sources of encouragement, teaching, or inspiration; and spiritual experiences and environments that help youth internalize and integrate a sense of belonging and meaning.”111 Helping adolescents to find their own encounter with Jesus is therefore not only supported by a missionary and evangelistic responsibility but also by the socio-psychological observation that adolescent conversion and spirituality (or religiosity) generally not only have a positive effect on but actually foster a positive adolescent identity development, well-being, and thriving. God’s story of Salvation in Jesus Christ is in fact good news to

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111Pamela Ebstyne King and Peter L. Benson, “Spiritual Development and Adolescent Well-Being and Thriving,” in Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence, 387.
youth and it should therefore be the center message of the church family involved in youth evangelism.

Reaching Young People Calls for Contextualization

We learned that adolescence is not just a cultural invention, adolescence have also become a dominant shaper of culture. From the sociological fact that every age-cohort is coined by the cultural and social settings during childhood and adolescence it follows that adolescents belong more in the here and now respectively are more part of today than the adult generations. A church that is determined to reach young people within and outside its ‘borders’ with the everlasting Gospel is always challenged to not only be culturally sensitive but actually culturally relevant while at the same time remaining doctrinally and ethically pure. It is never the question whether the biblical Truth or the Story of Salvation is culturally relevant (it always is) but rather whether it is communicated and expressed culturally relevant. Contextualization, therefore, is never an option for the missional church. Frost and Hirsch say that “the seemingly steadfast refusal or resistance by the church to seriously contextualize the gospel is one of its greatest mistakes and will sadly hasten its declining influence on Western society. It is not taking standard cross-cultural mission principles seriously and is therefore not taking the gospel seriously.”

Contextualizing is not about adjusting the content of the Christian message, the what, but about adjusting the ways, the approaches, the expressions, the language, and the means how the everlasting biblical Truth is lived and proclaimed in a particular cultural context. A church that puts youth evangelism on top of its missional agenda is thus also

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committed to make the truth understandable, believable, and accessible to a generation that is in many ways (but not in every way) different then the previous'. The everlasting Gospel needs to be interacting and relating with the specific adolescent socio-psychological and socio-cultural situations. A church with a youth evangelistic focus thus needs to examine the biblical truth in the light of the adolescent’s specific life-situation and cultural context so that it may become meaningful and may make sense in his or her particular world. It also requires to build up sustainable relational bridges to young people and to feel the pulse of their lives, the beat of their hearts and minds. If, by the Holy Spirit, the Gospel message thus penetrates the adolescent’s reality it may change it and morph the youth to see and understand themselves and their world in the reality of God. Then Jesus enters into the story of the youth and the life-story of the youth becomes part of God’s meta-narrative of salvation.

When the relational and incarnational church family makes youth evangelism the major concern of their missional agenda it may prevent the church from getting irrelevant and disconnected to the world in which it exists and which God still loves.

Youth as the Primary Mission Field

Dean Borgman has declared that “in terms of world missions, young people form the largest, most crucial, and most dynamic ‘unreached people group’ in the world” and therefore the youth “should be the first ‘foreign’ mission of the church.” In the light of the theological, sociological, and psychological research about the time of youth

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114Ibid., 29-30.
and life phase of adolescence this is more than just a bold statement.

If the church is not taking youth evangelism seriously and is not reaching the current youth it is, according to Rainer, in danger of “losing an entire generation.” Whereas about 65% of the builder generation and about 35% of the boomer generation in the United States had been reached for Christ there are only about 15% of the busters or the ‘Generation X’, which are the younger adults that have been reached by the Gospel. Rainer estimates that only about 4% of the current youth in the United States have been reached for Christ yet. Although these figures are rather foggy and maybe too pessimistic the trend that they display may actually fit with reality.

Although, recent studies about the spiritual lives of teenagers in the United States rightly call the Christian churches to be cautious not just to follow the alarmed voices that draw the picture about the youth and their spirituality in black color—since the youth is not in masses alienated by religion and the church—the fact remains that even for the religious youth faith is rather a “low-impact exercise” and could generally be characterized as “moralistic therapeutic deism.” Smith and Denton go so far to say


116 Ibid.


119 See Smith and Denton, Soul Searching, 162-171. According to Smith and Denton the parameters of this moralistic therapeutic deism are: 1. A God exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth. 2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. 3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. 4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. 5. Good people go to heaven when they die.
that “Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith.” Therefore, even the religious youth is in the vast majority still a group of people in need to be reached with the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ. A consequent youth evangelistic emphasis is desperately needed.

The Catholic Church in Germany has recently published a comprehensive youth research that studied the various living environments of young people and grouped the youth in Germany according to their “Sinus-Milieus.” A Sinus Milieu is a cluster of people that share a similar view of life, value orientation, and life style. Through the study seven cluster of youth or Sinus Milieus have become apparent. There are the traditional youth (4%), the classic middle-class youth (14%), the post-materialistic youth (6%), the consumption-materialistic youth (11%), the hedonistic youth (26%), the modern performers (25%), and the experimental youth (14%). Each milieu has its specific characteristics. However, the interesting aspect about this study is the fact that it comes to the conclusion that the Catholic Church in Germany only reaches youth in the traditional, classic-middle-class, and the post-materialistic milieus. Thus, the Catholic Church realized that their traditional attempts to reach young people have only a very limited impact among the 24% of already rather traditional oriented youth. The vast majority of youth in Germany is not reached at all. We may assume that this applies not only to the Catholic Church and not only to Germany. If the Christian church is not reaching people in their youth and their cultural settings, if young people have not been

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120 Smith and Denton, Soul Searching, 171.

addressed with the story of Salvation while they are in the process of constructing their own life-story, and if young people have not had significant relational experiences with people of faith—adults as well as peers—the chances are much bigger that they never will accept Christ or in later years remember their Christian experience and come back to Christ.

The time of youth has to be the primal mission field of the relational and incarnational church family. Not only because it is the specific time of meaning- and decision-making but also because the church has no better human potential for progress, renewal, and change than young people. The biblical account and the history of the Christian church know of many examples of God interacting with young people and of using youth to do extraordinary things. Having youth evangelism on top of the missional agenda also means to involve, equip, mentor, and empower young people in responsibilities in the church as well as in outreach and missionary activities. The example of non-stressful cultures respectively postfigurativ cultures can inform the church that when young people are not separated from adult activities and responsibilities but rather are introduced and accompanied into adult responsibilities the development processes of young people are not only accelerated but also less suspending and more harmonious. In this sense the church could actually be countercultural. Youth do not only need to belong to a relational and incarnational family of Christ but they actually want to belong if they are actually needed.

Alvin Reid has also identified youth evangelism as the church’s greatest challenge and primal mission field. He says: “I believe the greatest challenge confronting the church in the new millennium relates to youth ministry. We must address the issue of
youth evangelism, both in terms of evangelizing teenagers and equipping students to witness to their peers. There is a critical need for youth ministry built on relevant, conviction-laced biblical teaching. The church has an open door to feed the idealism of youth with Christian truth and values.\textsuperscript{122}

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOUTH EVANGELISM, A SURVEY OF LITERATURE, AND POSTMODERN PARADIGMS

Introduction

Approaching the field of youth evangelism from a historical perspective leaves the student rather into fallow land. Some would even argue that we are led into the desert. In his attempt to trace the history of evangelism John Mark Terry states that “the church paid scant attention to young people throughout most of Christian history. The church did not make special efforts to evangelize young people.”

Also Malan Nel says that “youth evangelism has never been high on the agenda of churches.” This estimation is supported by Nel’s observation that in all the literature about evangelism there is an “obvious lack of sensitivity for youth evangelism.”

Youth Evangelism, Youth Ministry, or Youth Education?

One reason why “youth evangelism has never been high on the agenda of


3 Ibid., 73.
churches"\textsuperscript{4} may be seen in the simple fact that youth as a specific life stage and youth
culture as a specific context of life are rather recent phenomena. While there have always
been young people throughout the human history it is just since about the last 150 years,
due to socio-cultural changes, that youth emerged and that adolescents are recognized as
a distinct group of people in society. For a long time young people were counted to the
world of adults as soon as they were big and strong enough for adult labor or at the latest
when they have gone through some of the visible physical changes of puberty. There is
thus no Christian tradition of specific youth evangelism. Young people were simply
evangelized in the same ways and contexts as adults. However, for many churches today
this is still true.

In biblical times, and up to the dawn of modernity, children and youth have only
been recognized within the socio-economical framework of the family. It was the
parents’ duty to educate their offspring in every aspect of life. In Old Testament times
children and youth were from birth a natural part of the covenant people. They just
belonged and grew up in faith in the context of religious socialization. In the early times
of the Church Christians lived in the midst of pagan societies and cultures and therefore it
was their mandate to educate their children and youth in the ‘fear of the Lord’ mainly at
home. If at all ‘evangelism’ of young people happened at home and it was thus not a
specific concern of the church to reach the youth, not to mention to reach out to young
people outside the Christian homes.

\textsuperscript{4}Nel, “Serving Them Back,” 65.
The Church between Nurturing Youth and Youth Evangelism

The fact that until recently children and youth have not at all been actual subjects of Theology and Missiology but rather were located in the scientific field of Religious Education is evidence that the churches’ concern was rather the education or nurturing of youth than the evangelization of youth. Although it would be a fatal misunderstanding to see youth evangelism and youth education as opposed to each other the history of the Christian church shows that the latter was by far prevailing. In fact, for a long time evangelism and education have been considered to be two “distinct categories”5 in the religious practices of the church.

Christian education as a ministry of the church can be traced back to the early times of the apostolic church when teachers and elders educated baptismal candidates (catechumeni) after conversion. Nevertheless, it did not go beyond that. Christian education was not understood as an evangelistic method and was instituted to instruct adult converts. With the emergence of the monastery at the dawn of the Middle Ages Christian education was predominantly put behind monastic walls where it withered isolated from society for centuries. The intellectual awakening during the Renaissance was a “missed opportunity for Christian education”6 since it did not find its way back to the center of the church but faded behind the new institution of the modern university. It was not until the Reformation that the educational responsibility of the church has


6Ibid, 78.
regained new meaning and significance. For the first time Calvin and Luther developed a philosophy of Christian education that not only aims in the acquisition of knowledge but that teaches actual lifestyle transformation.\(^7\) Luther not only published his Large Catechism but he also issued the Small Catechism by which he focused again on the educational responsibility of the parents at home.

Nevertheless, Luther and especially Melanchthon were also concerned to have children and youth to be educated in classical and humanistic knowledge as well as in knowing the Scriptures and the Catechism in public schools.\(^8\) The Reformation fostered religious education as a central part of the slowly growing public schools and their curricula where it has had its locus (at least in the European context) up to the present time. With the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, however, “many of the church-sponsored schools were forced to relinquish their monopoly over the educational institutions”\(^9\) and state-sponsored schools came in their place. Since at that time schools were still rather the privilege of the bourgeois and since the tension between church-sponsored and state-sponsored schools in many parts of Europe postponed the liberal idea of mass schooling, many children of the poorer classes were still left ignored and without schooling opportunities. It was “catastrophic for an entire generation of children living in the throes of the Industrial Revolution.”\(^10\)

\(^7\) See Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 78.
\(^9\) Ibid., 259.
\(^10\) Ibid., 260.
In the course of the Industrial Revolution and the connected societal changes, many young people and children were swept into the cities and the factories. The resulting disturbing situation of overworked, unattended, undereducated, and often also delinquent children and youth in the larger city centers of England moved Robert Raikes to develop in 1780 what became known as the Sunday School Movement. Raikes’ concept of the Sunday school was primarily literacy training by using the Bible as textbook with youth from the streets on the labor free Sunday. Sunday school students further had to memorize doctrines (catechism), were taught basic manners of morals, and were required to attend Christian worship. In order to accomplish that Raikes basically employed laypeople who simply had a love for young people and “a desire to see the Great Commission fulfilled in their own neighborhood.”

Raikes’ Sunday school concept soon multiplied and just five years later the first Sunday school opened 1785 in Virginia from where it spread across the United States and actually “became the first distinct ministry to youth in America.” However, “one factor that contributed to the growth of Sunday school was the inclusion of the children of church members in the schools.”

In the sway of the two Great Awakenings at the turn to and in the midst of the nineteenth century in the USA the Sunday school movement as an “extra-church

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11 Anthony and Benson, Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education, 262-263.
12 Ibid., 263.
agency"15 shifted its emphasis from a more philanthropic focus to the objective of youth evangelism and its “promoters began to emphasize the possibility of converting children en masse.”16 Thus the “evangelical spirit of revival became rooted in the Sunday school as the primary agent of church growth.”17

However, although Sunday school grew out of compassion and care for young people outside the church and was motivated by a deep Christian social and missional responsibility its evangelistic focus and influence faded at the turn to the twentieth century. Since the denominations gradually not only began to see the potential of the Sunday school for their growth but also as a means to educate their own children the movement began to become “divided along denominational lines”18 and around 1900 the Sunday School movement was in decline since “many . . . churches viewed Sunday School as merely a means of providing religious education for the children of their members.”19 In a similar way, Senter III notes that “as churches embrace the Sunday school, a transition took place that shifted the emphasis from evangelization to biblical instruction.”20

With the emergence of the International Council of Religious Education21 most

15 Anthony and Benson, Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education, 270.
17 Anthony and Benson, Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education, 270.
18 Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 79.
19 Terry, Evangelism, 181.
20 Senter, When God Shows Up, 57.
21 See Anthony and Benson, Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education, 270.
mainline churches have amalgamated the Sunday school movement with the mere task of nurturing their own children. Anthony and Benson conclude that while the Sunday school started out by emphasizing on social justice and public education of the poor, the movement had “evolved into a dynamic and critical program for reaching the lost and fulfilling the Great Commission.” However, it finally “transitioned into an organization that had . . . morphed into a passionless program of mainline denominationalism.” Christian education was again the major concern of the Christian church and was again reduced to the nurturing of those within their own ranks. Thus, the church’s concern for nurturing and protection of Christian youth ruled out the concern for the evangelizing of those outside the church.

A similar shift can be traced in the history of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). It started in 1844 (YWCA in 1858) as a movement to help young Christians who moved to the urban jungles, disconnected of their churches, to retain their Christian commitments. Soon the evangelical spirit of the young men gathered at the YMCA “drove the organization to an evangelistic ministry that witnessed revival from 1857-1859” in America. But somehow similar to the Sunday School movement at the beginning of the twentieth century it later mutated into an organization


23 Ibid. However, the original Sunday school idea though changed did not cease to exist. A modern example can be seen in the Metro Ministries, http://www.metroministries.org/about_us.php


26 This is the feminine equivalent.

27 Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 80.
with a mere "educational and athletic focus."\textsuperscript{28}

Despite such shifts, it should be noted that as soon as the youth or the adolescents emerged on the scene of western history there were Christian attempts to minister to them. In such early attempts like the Sunday School Movement, the YMCA, or the Society for Christian Endeavor lies also the actual birth of the Christian (parachurch) youth ministry. However, in the history of the church's concern for young people it becomes also evident that there is a vivid tension between the church's need for youth education, nurturing its Christian youth, and the church's actual call for youth evangelism, reaching a young generation with the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and not just with 'social activities'.\textsuperscript{29}

Youth as Most Receptive Group Experienced but Not Recognized

During the history of the great revivals in the United States the Christian churches have made the experience that youth are in fact the most receptive group of people for the Christian message. Not only have the revival movements mainly "attracted young people; they were often started by them."\textsuperscript{30} Cannister therefore refers to the two Great Awakenings in the eighteenth and nineteenth century primarily as "youth movements."\textsuperscript{31}

In fact, Alvin Reid's research of the revival movements in England and the United States gives ample evidence of the importance of youth both as 'receptors' and agents of

\textsuperscript{28}Senter, \textit{When God Shows Up}, 114.

\textsuperscript{29}I am referring here to the history of the YMCA specifically in the United States not further explored here.

\textsuperscript{30}Cannister, "Youth Ministry's Historical Context," 81.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid. See also Kenda Creasy Dean, \textit{Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 8.
evangelistic activities. Already the First Great Awakening, so Reid “was most powerfully at work among young people.” Jonathan Edwards, an important leader in the First Great Awakening, reflects on the revival movement of his time by saying that “the work has been chiefly amongst the young; and comparatively but few others have been made partakers of it. And indeed it has been commonly so, when God has begun any great work for the revival of his church; he has taken the young people, and has cast off the old and stiff-necked generation.” Reid documented that “most of the leaders of the revival were touched by God personally while young.” This includes such influential leaders like George Whitefield or Dwight Lyman Moody.

However, the awakenings in the eighteenth century were not only to a great extent inspired and led by young people, they “particularly affected the younger generation.” When later at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Second Great Awakening aroused “a major precipitating factor in this movement was the outbreak of revival on college campuses.” From twenty-five eyewitness accounts of revivals during the Second Great Awakening reported by pastors, the vast majority explicitly describe the important role that young people played or that young people were the most ‘affected’

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35Reid, Raising the Bar, 67.

36Ibid.

37Ibid., 68.
group of people. There was only one account that “asserted that no youth were involved.” In this light it does not come as a surprise that early scientific studies of conversion and reflections based on the empirical facts of the Awakenings concluded that conversion is mainly an adolescent phenomenon (see for instance Edwin Starbucks or Stanley Hall).

However, although many things regarding the revival movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, their high emotionalism, their hell and fear driven altar calls, may be reflected critically from today’s perspective and in the light of theology it still seems surprising that despite the revival experiences the church did not recognize youth evangelism as missionary work of “the highest kind.” Since “God-driven spiritual awakenings are often inspired by young people” and by referring to the Great Awakenings and the youth affected and involved Reid cautions that “those who fail to note the impact of youth in history are doomed to miss the potential of youth today.” The church today needs to recognize that regarding its missional calling youth are both the most crucial and receptive group of people as well as the most dynamic agents of revival. Youth evangelism, and as such, the church should view what we call youth ministry cannot be delegated but has to be at the center of the church’s mission in this world. Unfortunately, youth ministry has for a long time been a missional discipline that developed and flourished apart from the local church and when it later has been adapted

38 Reid, Evangelism Handbook, 431.
39 White, Gospel Workers, 207.
40 Reid, Raising the Bar, 64.
41 Ibid.
by the congregations its major concern became to secure and nurture the youth in their own ranks.

The Rise of Youth Ministry

The rise of Christian youth ministry goes more or less hand in hand with the emergence of the adolescent. Generally speaking this indicates that Christians were in fact soon responding to the socio-cultural changes that happened in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. One may identify the beginnings of Christian youth ministry with the emergence of the Sunday school movement, the urban ministry of the YMCA, the early juvenile temperance movements that grew out of a broader temperance movement in England, or the Young Peoples Association that grew out of prayer meetings in Brooklyn. But many would argue like Mark Senter III that “youth ministry gained its earliest notoriety in New England with the birth in Portland, Maine, of the Society of Christian Endeavor in 1881.”

The Beginnings—Socializing and Educating Youth for the Church and Society

The Society of Christian Endeavor was founded by Francis E. Clark and grew out of a concern for the ‘youth problem’ many churches in the States were faced with near the end of the nineteenth century. Although Sunday schools were still attended by many children and youth they “did not bridge the gap between childhood and adult

43 Ibid., 131-138.
44 Ibid., 4.
The methods used in worship and prayer meetings failed to interest more and more youth. Sunday school seemed childish and prayer meetings were boring. In the decades after the Second Great Awakening many churches experienced a loss of youth. But “not only was the church losing her youth; they had begun to ‘worship’ elsewhere” namely in alternative activities like picnics, socials, bicycle rides, theater attendance, visiting amusement parks, hanging out in a neighborhood saloon or a non-alcoholic soda fountain, etc. Clark’s effort to assist young Christian people in the churches to continue in their faith and “to promote an earnest Christian life . . . to increase their mutual acquaintance, and to make them more useful in the service to God” gave birth to a concept of youth ministry that endured up to our present time in the youth groups of the churches. The youth societies of the Christian Endeavor, so Cannister, became a “blueprint for youth groups in churches.” With the youth society Clark combined the conversion emphasis of the Sunday school with the YMCA’s focus on the social gathering of young people, as well as with the prayer and witness focus of the revival movements and the pledge centered commitment making of the juvenile

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45 Senter, When God Shows Up, 155.
46 Ibid.
47 Francis Clark, cited in Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 83.
48 Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 82.
49 “It is a prayer-meeting society, but not only a prayer-meeting society. It is a society for Christian service, but not only for Christian service. It unites prayer and work. It combines frequent confession of Christ with constant service for Christ.” Clark, cited in Senter, When God Shows Up, 163.
50 The pledge contained of two commitments. First, each member was expected to be present at every meeting (unless one was detained by some absolute necessity). Second, at the monthly experience meeting each member was expected to report his progress in the Christian life in the past weeks. See Senter, When God Shows Up, 157, 161-162.
temperance movements. The concept was successful and soon Christian Endeavor became an international organization that sponsored the first mass gatherings aimed specifically at young people and that issued the first magazine specifically designed to support and train Christian youth leaders in their ministries.51

The youth societies came into being and first flourished within the local churches fostered by pastors and parents to protect their young people from the ‘evil influences’ of a changing culture.52 But with its success the Society of Christian Endeavor was organized and emancipated from ecclesiastical control finally becoming an interdenominational and thus unapologetical youth fellowship.53 However, by the beginning of the twentieth century many denominations have adapted the successful concept of the Society of Christian Endeavor and have relocated it in their local congregations.54 Thereby they started their own youth programs but they focused the pledges and the teachings more on their denominational interests and priorities thus “maintaining denominational loyalties”55 among their youth. As a result of this, “denominational allegiances became primary factors in the development of youth

51See Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 82.

52See Senter, When God Shows Up, 154.

53Ibid., 164.

54This also true for the beginnings of the Adventist Youth Ministry. “Ellen White encouraged the growth of Adventist youth ministries, and . . . she suggested as a model the Christian Endeavour Society, a youth organization active in many Protestant churches at that time.” See, Trudy J. Morgan-Cole, “A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventist Youth Ministry,” in Getting It Right, 31.

ministry"56 and youth groups became the norm of congregational youth ministry. Because of the success of the Society of Christian Endeavor and the widespread implementation of the concept of youth groups (societies or clubs) in the context of the local churches the period up to the Second World War can be denoted as the period of Youth Societies57 with a major emphasis on socializing and educating youth into the Christian believes and practices. Committed to Christian progress mainly through prayer, Bible study and witness the societies granted its adolescent members the possibility “to grab hold of a distinct tradition and claim it for themselves.”58 For all intents and purposes the Christian Endeavor promoted a missionary method open to young ‘seekers’ which was both relational and testimonial. Nevertheless, it “was by no means reaching out [to] the heathens of secular society”59 and thus actual youth evangelism has rather taken the back seat in the church’s concern for young people.

During the pre-World-War II period most mainline protestant denominations experienced a shift of emphasis that moved their youth ministry even further from its missional roots. Such concerns as personal salvation, personal holiness, and full incorporation into the faith community faded and the focus on education and on changing society increased.60 Kenda Creasy Dean detects in this shift an erosion of Christian passion. She says that “early in the twentieth century, mainline Protestants broke ranks

56Senter, When God Shows Up, 181.
57See ibid., 147.
58Root, Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry, 38.
59Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 84.
60See Senter, When God Shows Up, 62-63.
with American evangelicals over liberal theology, eschewing evangelical purity movements in favor of a social gospel that emphasized 'doing good' over 'being good'— and divested themselves of the soteriological urgency of youth ministry’s revivalist beginnings."61 She further complains that “by the 1920s and 1930s the goals of the nascent field of youth ministry in mainline churches had become virtually indistinguishable from the goals of professional educators and public education."62 Cannister agrees with this diagnosis and says that “Christian Endeavor and its denominational clones are best identified as the first significant Christian education movements for adolescents."63 Thus, the shift parallels somehow the Sunday school move from an evangelistic focus to a mere concern for Christian education and nurturing.

**Parachurch Youth Evangelism and the Youth Rallies**

Up to the end of the World War II adolescence as a new socio-cultural phenomenon was not only identified but solidified in the societal contexts of America and Europe. The formal education with the rise of the public schools has in the first half of the twentieth century engrossed most of the adolescent life. With the high school the church lost influence over adolescents and was no longer a preferred location where young people met and had fellowship. The concentration of adolescents on campuses and the increased age segregation through the schools fostered the rise of the peer group and the importance of its influence on the individual youth. The spare time of youth was

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62 Ibid., 40.

63 Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 86.
more and more taken over by leisure-time activities and in the context of the emerging youth culture movies, popular music, and consumerism became the references for adolescent lifestyle and morality. The concept of the youth societies was severely challenged and became less relevant and the methods of church ministry to the young people were no longer effective or applicable.

In order to meet the youth where they are Evelyn McClusky established the Miracle Book Club (which is reference to the Bible) in 1933. Its mission was to evangelize students and to build student youth clubs not in churches but on the campuses. The goal was to invite high school students to accept Christ, to help the converts to realize and understand their new Christian identity with Christ living in them, to empower them for Christian lifestyle, and become a witness to their peers. By 1938 more than a thousand clubs were planted across the United States.64 The Miracle Club attracted people into leadership positions among which Jim Rayburn was the most effective.65 The Miracle Book Club was the first parachurch organization in the United States that focused on high school youth and McClusky became “the mother of parachurch youth ministry in the middle of the twentieth century”66 particularly because the Miracle Book Club was neither rooted nor located in the church.

However, already the first two decades of the twentieth century paved the way for a new missional and evangelistic focus in youth ministry. In 1904 two young Irish preachers set out to evangelize Great Britain and after seven years they realized that the

64 See Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 87.
65 See Senter, When God Shows Up, 218.
66 Ibid.
majority of people converted were youth. The decision was taken to focus their efforts on winning young people to Christ and they founded the National Young Life Campaign that found its way to America. Inspired by the Irish evangelists Jim Rayburn, former leader of the Miracle Book Club, started the Young Life Campaign in the United States in 1941. Soon Young Life rallies spread across the United States. With Young Life Rayburn fostered a youth ministry concept that was first leadership centered. The adult leader was in charge of weekly club meetings and was the primary speaker and teacher. It was second evangelism focused towards adolescents that did not attend church and the leader's parish is the local high school. Rayburn coined the idea that one has first to win the right to be heard and therefore there was a focus on a relational and authentic approach on the youth's own turf. Forth, besides the club meetings Rayburn fostered resort camps to spend the best time with youth in order to present the gospel. Finally, Rayburn did not preach, he just talked and thus fostered a conversational style of preaching. This approach of Young Life, rather than Young Life itself, made a lasting impact and became a blueprint for further youth ministries.

A further major witness of the new evangelistic parachurch approach to youth ministry is Youth for Christ. Youth rallies have become a wide spread method to speak to masses of youth. In 1944 Jack Wyrtzen who had started a Christian youth radio and attracted many young people gathered more than twenty-thousand youth at Madison Square Garden. Similar youth rallies where organized elsewhere, especially in the Chicago area where 1945 Youth for Christ International was founded. The goal was not only to win youth for Christ everywhere but also to promote evangelism everywhere and
to emphasize Christian living and missionary service.\textsuperscript{67}

Youth for Christ promoted a young evangelist with the name of Billy Graham who became the most publicly visible representative of a new kind of mass evangelism.\textsuperscript{68} In the following years Graham “crisscrossed North America organizing Youth for Christ chapters and preaching.”\textsuperscript{69} Graham’s “straightforward theology of the need for a personal (individual) relationship and intimacy with Jesus Christ”\textsuperscript{70} struck a chord with the American public. Buoyed by the success of his strategy Graham soon established the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association promoting many evangelistic campaigns, Christian radio and television, Christian magazine (like \textit{Christianity Today}) and evangelistic trainings. The new crusade evangelisms were no longer youth rallies and evangelism lost its previous focus on young people. Although Graham was highly influential and preached to millions of people around the world (by 1976 one and a half million decision cards were signed)\textsuperscript{71} the crusades were “not so effective as it may seem”\textsuperscript{72} since many persons who attended the crusades were already Christians.\textsuperscript{73}

Cannister sees in the Youth for Christ rallies and the following crusades the theological roots of youth evangelism to be developed “in stark contrast to the theology

\textsuperscript{67}See Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 88.


\textsuperscript{70}Root, \textit{Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry}, 47.

\textsuperscript{71}See Tuttle, \textit{The Story of Evangelism}, 385.

\textsuperscript{72}Terry, \textit{Evangelism}, 170.

\textsuperscript{73}See ibid.
of nurture upon which youth education had been founded.” However, the crusades but also the initial youth rallies missed an important aspect. While the crusades but especially the youth rallies “could provide cool events in a popular nationalistic flavor, they could not provide the one thing adolescents desired most: intimacy through self-chosen relationships.”

With Young Life Jim Rayburn has already paved the way for a new relational kind of youth ministry that also fostered the idea of incarnating oneself within the culture of the youth. Young Life already fostered a concept of youth evangelism as a kind of ‘friendship evangelism’ that attempted “to connect with the adolescent at his or her place of most vulnerable need in a modernized world, the self-chosen relationship.” Young Life also promoted a new way of communication. “It standardized a relational and conversational method of delivering a talk, in contrast to the authoritative biblical preaching of the youth rallies.” With this approach “Young Life had become the leader of youth ministry” and youth evangelism was located and organized in a distinct parachurch context.

**Youth Ministry: Professionalized, Program-Oriented, Entertaining**

After the World War II period not only adolescence as a specific life phase was a

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74 Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 89.


76 Ibid., 53.


78 Ibid., 54.
given fact but so was youth culture as a manifestation of the adolescents' search for identity. Early parachurch youth ministries that evolved in these times were focused on evangelism. As missionary agencies they responded to youth culture "by allowing it to inform the language and topics of youth ministry"\(^7\) and thus "early Christian youth workers saw themselves as missionaries to youth culture."\(^8\) The main mission field, however, were the high school campuses. By using relational strategies Christian adult youth workers found ways outside the church to engage high school students and help them to find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The most prominent representative of such an approach was the Campus Life strategy of Youth for Christ (YFC). Since the youth rallies lacked continuity and rather served as a punctual evangelistic highlight and since the traditional YFC Clubs were crowded with youth who claimed to have had a conversion experience before they joined YFC a new evangelistic effort to reach youth was seen as being necessary by a new generation of YFC leaders. When Campus Life was launched in the early 1960s young leaders like Mike Yaconelli or Wayne Rice were among its promoters. The idea was to establish Campus Life clubs that were programmed entirely for unchurched kids. Rice mentions that they had to stop having club meetings in churches and to engage in image-building by professionally promoting the clubs through an elaborate publicity campaign. But most of all "Camp Life club meetings had to appeal to a non-Christian audience"\(^8\)\(^1\)

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\(^7\)Mark Oestreicher, *Youth Ministry 3.0: A Manifesto of Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We Need to Go* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 47.

\(^8\)Ibid.

\(^8\)\(^1\)Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again): From Bells and Whistles to Flesh and Blood* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 61.
and thus they had to be anything but boring. "We have done everything possible to make Christianity as appealing to young people as we could," says Rice. In the new era of youth ministry starting in the early sixties good programming became the new challenge for youth workers but it also became a pitfall for youth ministry. By looking back over fifty years of youth ministry Rice finally states that "programs may keep kids coming, but they won’t keep them connected" and the youth program became a “substitute for participation in the church.”

However, the new concept was successful and attracted many youth on high school campuses. Parachurch youth ministries to high school students designed after Campus Life spread across the country and the late fifties to the late sixties can be marked as the high point of parachurch youth evangelism. In the light of the new dynamic movement in parachurch youth ministry the denominations and churches could not turn a blind eye to this new approach of youth ministry. Churches themselves began to hire youth workers, many of them former leaders in parachurch organizations, as youth pastors with the aim to copy and adapt the parachurch youth ministry concept and technologies to their local church contexts.

The beginnings of the professionalization of youth ministry can be localized in such parachurch ministries like Youth for Christ or Young Life. However, what pushed

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82 Rice, Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again), 67.
83 Ibid., 101.
84 Ben Patterson, cited in Rice, Reinventing Youth Ministry, 102.
85 See Senter, When God Shows Up, 212.
86 See Rice, Reinventing Youth Ministry, 113.
youth ministry in a new dimension was when the churches started hiring youth pastors
and professional youth ministers. The denominations and most of the local churches
started to establish their own youth ministry departments. Many churches, however,
considered youth ministry like an apprenticeship and expected the youth pastors “to soon
grow out of this fun-and-games period” in order to deal with the ‘real ministry’. The
training of the youth pastors happened rather incidentally and often was provided by
parachurch youth agencies. A strong promoter of the church based youth ministry
became the Youth Specialties founded by Wayne Rice and Mike Yaconelli in 1968. Not
only did Youth Specialties generate an amplitude of programming ideas and activities for
youth groups, marketed to church youth pastors and leaders, but it held national youth
workers conventions to train and nurture lay people but also many professional youth
pastors. With the additional Group Magazine for youth workers parachurch youth
ministry technology was also distributed “to people who were more interested in methods
for keeping students active in youth ministry than in full cycle discipleship.” Although
the parachurch youth ministry concepts were effectively designed for youth evangelism
most of the Christian churches employed and adapted these methods rather “to maintain
youth ministries of Christian adolescents in church settings while practically ignoring the
vast majority of young people who had not made a commitment to the Christian faith.”
The basic idea of youth evangelism again eroded in many cases as soon as the churches

87 Senter, When God Shows Up, 292.
88 See also Rice, Reinventing Youth Ministry, 113-114.
89 Senter, When God Shows Up, 251.
90 Ibid., 250.
got hold of the youth ministry technology developed by individuals and by non-denominational parachurch agencies.

The concern for actual youth evangelism eroded and the youth ministries of the churches became more and more vulnerable to the fun-and-games criticism that began to spread among the Christian denominations near the end of the twentieth century. Although such a criticism was often rather polemic and ignoring the many positive and spiritual effects of the youth ministry such critics were not without any reason. In this respect Senter III identifies some major problems of the youth ministries at the turn to the second millennium.

First, many churches employed youth workers and youth pastors that were young and had good relational skills to connect with teens and youth. A common denominator to start working with teens was fun and games something the youth leaders were good at. Thus, it happened that many youth ministries did not really "progress to engaging Christian content, much less experiencing God in their collective experience." It happened that in fact youth have been over-entertained but under-challenged by the churches' youth ministries.

Second, so Senter III, the downgrading of youth evangelism in general but also of the nurturing of churched youth was fostered by the "easy accessibility of programming materials from a wide range of sources" that somehow promoted a "Christianity-lite" understanding of biblical faith. A third aspect that made the youth ministry vulnerable to the fun-and-games criticism can be seen in the 'numbers game' that youth ministries

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92 Ibid.
often were forced to play. The success and thus the justification of a youth ministry often have been measured by the numbers of teens that attend youth ministry events. Senter III believes that such pressures fostered superficiality “in which entertaining activities predominated while the gospel was watered down to an easy believism and forms of cheap grace.”

Relocating Youth Ministry and Rediscovering Youth Evangelism

More recent reflections about the role and the function of the youth ministries of the churches point towards a reintegration and relocation of the youth ministry into the local context of the faith community. Clark who has been ministering to youth for more than thirty years both in parachurch as well as in church contexts comes to the conclusion that the ultimate goal of the churches youth ministries is “the full relational and systemic assimilation of the emerging adult into the life of the Christian community known as the church.” In a similar way Wayne Rice, cofounder of Youth Specialties, today critically reflects on the past fifty years of youth ministry that was marked by creating relevant and attractive programs to have kids attending and to keep them connected to the church. He says: “The mistake we made in the past wasn’t so much in the kind of programs we ran but in our reliance on them to keep kids coming to our youth groups. Programs may keep kids coming, but they won’t keep them connected.” Rice has now become a strong promoter of the reintegration of the youth ministry into the intergenerational and family-

based context of the local church. "For hundreds of years," so Rice, "the church was intergenerational and family-based. Somehow in the process of getting youth ministry established in the church, we undermined the unity of the church which now must be restored." The youth pastor's job today is to bring the generations together again "as a way of getting the kids back into the adults' hair" because "the spiritual formation of children and youth is the responsibility of not just the youth pastor but the entire congregation." In promoting a new wave of youth ministry, called youth ministry 3.0, Mark Oestreicher urges a new generation of youth leaders to refocus and understand that "isolated youth groups have done just as much harm as good...Work to find meaningful ways for intergenerational community and relationships." Also Senter III observes that the reinventing of youth ministry "now may have passed back to local churches."

Also Dean et al. are convinced that "youth ministers no longer serve congregations primarily by herding teenagers into youth groups for their protection and entertainment;" rather the church is called to "include young people as participants in the faith community, not in the church basement or on a third-floor classroom windowsill, but at the very heart of the Christian community." The separation of the

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97 Ibid., 128.
98 Ibid., 149.
100 Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 290.
101 Dean, *OMG*, 16.
102 Ibid, 46.
generations that has been accepted and adapted in the churches and somehow also fostered by a professionalized youth ministry did harm the church. Scott Wilcher states that “our traditional model of ministry, our earnest efforts have created stark generational divisions within the Church, dropping most of our young people into a relational vacuum after graduation from high school” respectively after growing out of the youth ministry.

Finally, Dean et al. conclude that “much of the literature that now exists for children’s, youth, young adult, and family ministries urges us to integrate young people more fully into the relationally rich practices of the congregation, even while offering teenagers important peer relationships as they grapple with faith.” While the nurturing and educational aspects of youth ministry have to be relocated and reintegrated into the relational context of the intergenerational faith community youth evangelism must be rediscovered and become a missional priority of the church and its youth ministers and leaders. “Churches,” so Dean et al., “can no longer afford to limit youth ministry to teenagers who gather in the church basement. The research on adolescence, and our citizenship in a global village, require us to extend our reach.”

Youth Evangelism and Youth Ministry Literature

It has already been noted that there is a significant lack of specific literature that

103 Scott Wilcher, The Orphaned Generation: The Father’s Heart for Connecting Youth and Young Adults to Your Church (Chesapeake, VA: The Upstream Project, 2010), 171.

104 Dean, OMG, 113.

105 Ibid., 26.
deals with youth evangelism. Such an observation however has to be complemented by the fact that there is an impressive variety of literature available in the field of youth ministry.

How To Do Youth Ministry: Inside-Out or Outside-In

In the second half of the last century youth ministry literature became a new category of the religious book market. Most of the literature published in these times was rather dealing with ideas for programming and about how to do youth and student ministry. Group and Youth Specialties have been the major agencies that published that kind of literature to offer practical support for the work with young people and how-to-do assistance for youth leaders.

Although such literature was intended to help youth leaders and ministers to more effectively organize their ministry, work with young people, attract them with quality programs, and better relate to youth the actual context was rather keeping Christian youth and students connected to the church and its faith tradition than actually reaching out to unchurched youth in our societies. But despite the fact that youth evangelism was not in the specific focus of the youth ministry literature it would be too narrow to state that the issue and concern was not present or touched at all. However, to use the terminology of Pete Ward, the main line youth ministry was based on an “inside-out” respectively a “nucleus-fringe approach.”

Although the nucleus-fringe approach of youth ministry came about because of the churches’ concern to raise their own children and youth in the

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faith Ward is certainly right to say that such an approach is not only legitimate but also “rightly evangelistic.”

Nevertheless, Ward was challenging the traditional youth ministry approach by promoting an outside-in approach that more radically calls for an incarnational ministry that leaves the comfort zone of the classical youth group in order to meet the youth at the places where they are and hang out. Ward was thus pointing to the fact that there are many youth in society that traditional youth ministry never gets in touch with. Therefore youth workers are needed that are able to connect to these youth, win their confidence, and live the gospel among them so that finally unchurched young people find faith in Jesus and “a solution to church.” Ward is aware that such an approach will in most cases ultimately lead to new worship services, separated from existing local churches and the adult congregation. However, in the long run Ward is hoping that traditional churches will start to change as more unchurched young people come to Christ and are worshiping God in new ways.

Despite some open questions regarding the relation between the local church and the outside-in approach Ward’s contribution can be seen as a call for the church and its traditional youth ministry to think more in depth about reaching unchurched young people and about an incarnational and contextual approach in the context of actual youth evangelism. Although, as Ward affirms, traditional youth ministry and its literature in a

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109 Ibid., 73.
110 Ibid., 74.
111 Ibid., 132-134.
broader sense can be seen as evangelistic in nature it is rather about evangelizing churched youth.

Models of Youth Ministry

The study of more recent literature in the area of youth ministry reveals a trend towards the promotion of youth ministry models. Among such has already been a first and very influential book by Mark DeVries entitled *Family Based Youth Ministry*. DeVries was calling for a change in youth ministry since traditional youth ministry was in danger to isolate youth from the families and from being connected to the total body of Christ. "If the youth ministries are going to have a lasting impact, we must move away from our traditional model of placing highly programmed youth activities at the heart of our work. Instead, we must give a central place to the more significant ministry of connecting young people to their own ‘great cloud of witnesses.’" DeVries thus is somehow paving the way to a more profound rethinking of youth ministry that brings the importance of the local and intergenerational faith community in focus.

The promotion of models for youth ministry became more popular as the youth ministry was looking for new ways to work with young people and minister to them. Middendorf for instance suggested a *Worship-Centered Youth Ministry* that highlights the importance to make worship a way of life and to build worship-centered communities with teens. As the call for a deeper reflection of spiritual formation and a rediscovery

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112 DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, 43.

113 Ibid., 125-126.

of spiritual practices became prominent among the Christian churches also youth ministry literature reflected this ‘trend.’ Tony Jones sees “people harking back to the spiritual disciplines”\textsuperscript{115} who finally contribute to a “renaissance” of youth ministry.\textsuperscript{116} Also books like \textit{Presence-Centered Youth Ministry} by Mike King or \textit{Contemplative Youth Ministry} by Mark Yaconelli are inviting youth leaders to be more concerned about nurturing actual spirituality and embracing spiritual traditions and symbols of the whole church community\textsuperscript{117} as well as being grounded “in prayer as well as evangelism—in silence as well as acts of justice...refusing to be so busy that you overlook God in your ministry.”\textsuperscript{118}

By putting evangelism parallel to acts of social justice Yaconelli refers to another issue that dominates current discussions of youth ministry: Kingdom thinking. This means to go beyond the traditional way of doing mission trips with youth and be more concerned about claiming the kingdom of God by acts of social justice thus involving youth in actions to heal the broken world. Youth evangelism in the context of acts of social justice is the subject of the book \textit{Deep Justice in a Broken World}. It provides recourses to help youth leaders involving kids to serve others and right the wrongs that are around them in order to “unearth the hope and freedom of the gospel.”\textsuperscript{119} A similar emphasis is made by the book \textit{Toward a Prophetic Youth Ministry} that is especially


\textsuperscript{116}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{117}See Mike King, \textit{Presence-Centered Youth Ministry: Guiding Students Into Spiritual Formation} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 30-41.

\textsuperscript{118}Mark Yaconelli, \textit{Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 25.

addressing the spiritual, personal and social needs of youth in an urban context so that youth may “grow in Christ, develop into ethical persons and become engaged in social action.”

*Missional Youth Ministry*, published in 2011, is a call to integrate teens and youth into the whole body of Christ and to involve them in “intergenerational missional experiences where everyone in the church is invited to participate.” Thus, this book is echoing another issue that became prominent in youth ministry literature: the need to have youth involved together with adult members in the worship and mission of the church. A concern that is also reflected in the recent youth ministry literature that calls for a relocating of the youth ministry into the intergenerational community of the local church (which already has been discussed above).

Mark DeVries with his latest book, *Sustainable Youth Ministry*, is supporting the idea of relocating Youth Ministry in the local church and makes a strong point by saying: “With so many extraordinary resources available, churches really don’t need more ideas, more passion, more zeal, more energy, more enthusiasm. What they need is the ability to take what they already have and turn it into something that works.”

Theological Reflections of Youth Ministry and Youth Evangelism

Since the activity and program driven approach of traditional youth ministry has

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122 Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn’t Last and What Your Church Can Do About It* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16.
been more and more questioned amongst others by the fact that despite a professionalized youth ministry many youth are leaving the church anyway—a whole body of recent literature is specifically dealing with this phenomenon—\(^{123}\) not only new approaches and models of youth ministry came onto the table of the discussion but also the need for a more profound and fundamental theological reflection of youth ministry became evident.

Michael Warren, a Catholic Scholar, can be seen as an early representative of a more profound reflection about youth or rather young adult ministry who at the same time is also one of the rare voices that highlighted the churches' duty to be more concerned about youth or young adult evangelism. He devoted a whole chapter to the subject of young adult evangelism and is convinced that an "evangelizing ministry to young adults will be a liberating ministry for the church"\(^{124}\) since young people "are looking for the signs of transformation in the very persons and communities that would call them to transformation"\(^{125}\) and thus "are calling to the churches to be better, to become further liberated, to be zones that combine freedom and mutual direction, to be more given to the service of one's sisters and brothers."\(^{126}\)

Thus, Warren believes that a church that intentionally reaches out to young people

\(^{123}\) The most important Adventist contribution is the book *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church* by Roger L. Dudley (cited above). But there are a number of other books that refer to the problem of youth dropouts alike. See for instance: David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011); Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christians: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith and How to Bring Them Back* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2010); Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009); Thom S. Rainer and Sam S. Rainer III, *Essential Church?: Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008).


\(^{125}\) Ibid., 115.

\(^{126}\) Ibid.
will ultimately change in a positive way. However, he also believes that youth evangelism “demands that the churches first be converted to young people.” Warren sees youth evangelism as a “matter of crossing over through love and understanding into the culture and individual experience of others” and as a matter of a parenting attitude of the church body since “parenting involves a crossing-over into the world and experience of the child.” So, Warren is urging the churches to be more serious about young people and at the same time about being “Jesus-centered communities” in the context of an incarnational understanding of the Gospel.

The importance of a new understanding of an incarnational and also contextual approach in youth ministry has found many other promoters among which can be highlighted Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster with their book *The Godbearing Life.* Also Andrew Root has called for a more profound understanding of a relational youth ministry in the context of a theology of incarnation. An incarnational approach also underlines the importance to think in relational terms regarding youth evangelism.

Close to the turn of the last century Dean Borgman published a practical theology for youth ministry which is also a sign that youth ministry was moving from the education to the theology department. Borgman reflects in a systematic way on the

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128 Ibid.

129 Ibid., 115-116.

130 Ibid., 116.


theology of various issues that are youth ministry related. Although there is a significant blind spot since Borgman omits a theology of the church as the actual home-base of youth ministry he opens his book by urging the Christian church to realize that “young people form the largest, most crucial, and most dynamic ‘unreached people group’ in the world” and that finally “young people should be the first ‘foreign’ mission of the church.”

When in the year 2001 the book Starting Right with the subtitle “Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry” has been published as the actual debut title in the new academic book line of Youth Specialties it was also the first actual academic textbook about youth ministry. The book does not only provide a concise history of youth ministry in its constant tension between education and evangelism but it also warns against a separation of the two. “Youth Ministry must be both,” says Cannister, “missional and educational—concerned with both evangelism and discipleship.” However, Cannister may be looking at the issue a little bit too much just from a youth ministry perspective since the role and function of the local faith community seems to be almost out of the picture which seems to be true for the whole textbook despite many references to the church as the larger context of youth ministry. In the section that discusses various approaches or models of youth ministry one approach is also assigned to evangelism. Although Terry McGonigal concludes his chapter by saying that “the

133 Borgman, When Kumbaya Is Not Enough, 4.

134 Ibid., 29-31.


136 Cannister, “Youth Ministry’s Historical Context,” 90.
Scriptures clearly teach the biblical priority of youth evangelization it does not become clear what this postulated priority actually means for the church also due to the fact that the subject is presented as one of many possible approaches to youth ministry.

The book *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church* published in 2001 offers a systematic understanding of philosophical and ecclesiological views of youth ministry by presenting and evaluating four basic types of youth ministry approaches. Thereby the book also points to the fact that youth ministry cannot be seen apart from the church and in as much as there is a need for a more profound thinking about youth ministry there is also a need to be more clear about the nature of the church. Youth ministry is in the tension of the question where mission ends and church begins respectively whether youth are part of the church now or in the future and between an emphasis on fellowship or mission. The four approaches discussed in the book finally all wrestle with the fact that churches need to pay much more attention to the youth both inside and outside its borders and thus to its responsibility to do both evangelize and disciple youth as it makes every service opportunity “equally available to young people” and gives them places “to exercise their giftedness and leadership in local assemblies of believers.” The discussion of four different approaches of youth ministry finally concludes with the notion that such a discussion would probably not happening if the church was healthy and...

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139 Ibid., 158.

140 Ibid., 157.
would not have "failed to live up to its own mandate"\textsuperscript{141} to reach and nurture young people.

The theological thinking about youth ministry reflected in more recent literature is not only paying more attention to the actual issue of youth evangelism (which was traditionally rather a focus of parachurch youth ministries) but also to the importance of relationally and holistically include and integrate youth in the local faith community (rather than isolating them through youth ministry). Youth evangelism and the local community are thus more and more seen not as two separate issues but as two issues that are mutually dependent. This is also supported by Ed Stetzer’s analysis of how younger unchurched youth may be reached for Christ. It is less by new methods of evangelism than rather by a church family that lives a real Christian community with a deep spiritual and Bible based conviction that does address difficult issues, wrestle with questions, and "despise pat answers"\textsuperscript{142} as well as lives responsively by an attitude of serving and fosters cross-generational relationship in a mentoring spirit. Youth evangelism is here first and foremost located an attitude of the whole church and less in a specific event or strategy. Such a view resonates with the general parameters of a postmodern youth.

**Youth Evangelism in the Postmodern Context**

Major social and cultural changes are a phenomenon of the human history. When in the time of the Renaissance humankind was moved to the center of reality, fostered by a new worldview where the earth is embedded in a solar centric system and by scientific

\textsuperscript{141}Senter et al., *Four Views of Youth Ministry*, 159.

\textsuperscript{142}Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 140.
discoveries of the laws of nature, the modern era was born. The subsequent
Enlightenment finally elevated human reason to the center of knowledge and the
individual self became the focus of life. In addition to the new autonomy and rationality
the Newtonian understanding of the physical world as a mechanism functioning
according to laws of order and regularity laid the foundation of the modern scientific
thinking. Science is the source of truth and research will ultimately solve all human
problems. Modernity is thus also marked by a strong optimism and a belief in progress
and technology.

Despite of many technological developments and scientific progress the world did
not become a better one. The modern era is marked by two world wars of the crudest
kinds, by economic and ecologic crises of unmatched dimensions, and the obvious
hypocrisy of social authorities and leaders in politics, economy, and religion. The initial
optimism fainted in the light of increased and more complicated problems.
Postmodernity thus can be seen as a reaction to the failings of modernity thereby
deconstructing the values and worldview of the modern era.

However, there is a debate about whether postmodernism is actually a new
cultural and intellectual era or whether it is just a time of transition leading to a
"transmodern period" since postmodernism with its claim that there is no normative
truth is actually committing "epistemological suicide." Some also argue that

143 See James Paker III, “A Requiem for Postmodernism—Whither Now?” The Southern Baptist
Journal of Theology 5, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 50.

144 Ibid.
"postmodernity is little more than modernity’s becoming critically aware of itself"\textsuperscript{145} and it is thus just a phenomenon of modernity slowly fading from the scene.

Nevertheless, it is without question that the modern mind-set is about to change and that youth are coined by a postmodern “shift in worldview,”\textsuperscript{146} culture of thinking, and interpreting. Thus the current time and culture young people grow up in can be seen as “a time of transition from the modern to an uncertain postmodern period”\textsuperscript{147} shaped by “an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set.”\textsuperscript{148}

Parameters of Postmodernism

There are many ways to observe and describe the dawning ‘postmodern’ mind-set in both popular and academic thinking. However, there are several agreed typical parameters of postmodernism that stand in contrast to the modern mind-set. Some of which shall be highlighted briefly here.

Relativism

Emerging generations today no longer just believe that their world will be a better place than the world of their parents. The optimistic believe in the inevitable progress is

\textsuperscript{145}See Jim Kitchens, \textit{The Postmodern Parish: New Ministry for a New Era} (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2003), 7.


\textsuperscript{147}Robert E. Webber, \textit{Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 35.

challenged by “a gnawing pessimism.”

Big ideologies like capitalism or communism have failed to be true concepts that make life better. There is no longer an understanding of an objective scientific and rational truth with a capital 'T' but rather truth is relative and situational and cannot just be limited to its rational dimension. The same applies to values.

**Subjectivism**

It is no longer believed that one person or group of people can claim to have the truth or solutions to all the problems or have the answer for all questions. No one can be really objective in his interpretation of the world and of reality and thus looking at the things from the outside. Reality and truth is therefore always subjective. Something might to be true and real for me but that does not have to be the same for someone else. Therefore, meta-concepts like ideologies that work for everyone are rather to be rejected since the world and life is too diverse and complex.

**Pluralism**

There is a difference between pluralism and plurality. Plurality can be seen as a synonym for diversity and can be used in a descriptive way. Young people today grow up in a divers society, with peers representing various ethnic groups, religions and cultures. In a globalized world young people are also aware of the fact that there is a plurality of ideas, world views, and perspectives. The “plural” in today’s socio-cultural context is obvious and needs to be respected. But acknowledging and respecting plurality does not exclude to have and articulate a personal position and worldview in the

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postmodern context. Pluralism, however, describes a philosophical or ideological response to the reality of plurality and diversity. Postmodern pluralism finally is stipulating equality of ideas, views, and perspectives and thus accepts every position as equally true and everything can stand alongside each other even when contradicting. Subsequently, a postmodern pluralism nurtures relativism. In consequence, postmodernism is also questioning ultimate authority.

**Holism**

"Postmodern holisms," says Grenz, "entails an integration of all dimensions of personal life—affective and intuitive as well as cognitive." Truth is therefore not just something that is intellectually reasonable but what feels to be true. Emotions and intuition are valid arbiter of truth as well. Experience is therefore a high value and much more important than theory. Young people therefore rather want to see the truth and experience it. The concept of holism also underlines the importance of authenticity especially evident among the youth. "More than anything . . . they are looking for 'authentic' people. They do not want just promises; they are looking for people whose lives and deeds match up with their words."

**Community**

The postmodern mind-set is keenly conscious of the social dimension of life and thus values the importance of community. The value of community is also nurtured by

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the postmodern worldview of the “interrelationship of all things”\textsuperscript{152} and “the conviction that each person is embedded in a particular human community leads to a corporate understanding of truth.”\textsuperscript{153} Postmodern people “are looking for places of belonging that may be the primary basis for the formation of their sense of identity.”\textsuperscript{154}

**Spirituality**

The holistic conception of the postmodern mind-set also extends to the religious or spiritual dimension of life. “Indeed, postmoderns affirm that personal existence may transpire within the context of a divine reality.”\textsuperscript{155} Since “rationalism, empiricism, existential humanism, and the entire approach of modernity have failed to provide a life of meaning . . . they seek for some spiritual reality that will answer their pressing need.”\textsuperscript{156} However, spirituality and religious experience are often not sought within traditional churches because religious institutions are rather mistrusted.

**Symbolism**

The postmodern mind-set is coined by a highly multimedia driven culture where the image is more important than the word. Webber argues that there is indeed a significant “shift in communication from the verbal to the symbolic”\textsuperscript{157} and symbolic

\textsuperscript{152}Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 35.


\textsuperscript{157}Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 94.
forms of communication have "an emphasis on the visual."\textsuperscript{158} The visual dominates the spoken. According to Webber this is not new but in fact similar to ancient times. Also Sweet says, that humans in general think in images and not words, therefore "image-driven is not distinctive to postmodern culture but to the human mind itself. The human mind is made up of metaphors."\textsuperscript{159} Thus, postmodernism brings symbols, metaphors, and images back to the center of communication.

**Stories**

Narrative has become a primary means of communication in a postmodern context. "Since propositional logic has fallen on hard times, stories carry more weight in conveying truths."\textsuperscript{160} In a postmodern mindset people get less convinced by communicative ways of listing one logic argument after another. "A narrative exercises a force apart from argumentation and proof"\textsuperscript{161} it is an important way to reach the postmodern mind. Story-telling has been in fact the primary means of transmitting identity, values, and beliefs in ancient times. However, although a narrative "provides the principal means by which every community legitimates itself"\textsuperscript{162} a metanarrative is suspicious.

\textsuperscript{158}Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 35.


\textsuperscript{161}Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 44.

\textsuperscript{162}Ibid.
Postmodernism and Evangelism

Youth in the Western world are growing up in a postmodern context. Many of the postmodern parameters have also shaped the minds of young people. Although postmodernism is sometimes seen as something evil among Christians the current cultural transition opens more opportunities then threats. Since postmodemity is also a critic of a modern paradigm and worldview it is not just deconstructing and changing but it is also restoring things. This is also true regarding the church and evangelism.

Postmodemity has positive aspects. It emphasizes the value of spirituality. It corrects a one-sided obsession with doctrinal purity at the expense of religious experience. It is suspicious of the uncontested reign of science. It recognizes the fragility of our world and the finiteness of its resources and demands responsible stewardship and justice. It emphasizes personal integrity and the relational aspect of religion. It demands pluriformity, space for individual opinion, and tolerance. The major philosophical and theological premises of postmodemity must be taken seriously. They are often challenging but they are not unanswerable. Moreover, many aspects of postmodernity are, in fact, akin to important facets of Adventist Christianity and have the potential to enrich rather than destroy the unity of the church. They provide important stepping stones to reach postmodern secular people around us with ‘present truth.’

New Opportunities to Speak about God

While in a modern mind-set it is believed that we live in a self-contained universe excluding all transcendence postmodernism is less exclusive regarding ‘outside’ influence. “We can now speak of God in a cultural context that grants a far more open-minded hearing to the assertion of God’s continuing, active involvement in the life of the world than it received when scientists felt they had eliminated the need of God as an explanatory cause.” In fact, as Sweet is pointing out by referring to several writers,
“this culture is not so much a ‘culture of disbelief’ as a culture of spiritual hungerings and hucksterings.”  

As evident in the media, music, press, politics, and many other social and cultural agencies God is not a taboo but people are asking for and referring to God.  

“People want to know God. They want less to know about God or know about religion than to know God. People want to experience the ‘Beyond? In the ‘Within.’”

While in a modern mind-set it is believed that morality and ethics for the society is based on reason rather than a superior, transcendent authority postmodernism rejects the hegemony of Kantian thought and “opens the debate about ethics in postmodernism to a whole range of perspectives, from a rampant relativism to an approach rooted in a transcendent God.”

Although it is true that the postmodern pluralism and relativism per se are suspicious to any kind of superior morality they on the other hand open the door for alternatives ‘that work.’ What contributed to the impressive church growth in the first centuries of the post apostolic time (a time that is comparable to a postmodern and post-Christian era) was that fact that Christians lived and alternative life within society, morally and ethically, that was appealing.

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165 Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 409.

166 Ibid., 412-420.

167 Ibid., 420.


169 See Alan Kreider, “‘They Alone Know the Right Way to Live:’ The Early Church and Evangelism,” in *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, ed. Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P. Greenman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 169-186.
While in a modern mind-set it is believed that science will bring inevitable progress and improvement of life postmodernism has rejected such a human hubris. "Losing their ‘faith’ in science may, in new ways, open people to the church’s message that meaning in human life is to be found in relationship to God, not in science’s solving all our ills." The importance of a personal relationship with God, actual trust (pistis), as well as trust in Scriptures can get a second wind in a postmodern context while on the contrary “evidentiary apologetics falls short and fails in postmodernity because it tacitly trains the new initiate to depend upon science as higher source of truth than Scriptures given in Jesus Christ.”

While in a modern mind-set it is believed that “knowledge is inherently good” and will lead people to positive change postmodern people are aware of the destructive consequences that “lurk in the unstrained pursuit of knowledge.” Thus, a postmodern mind-set might rather be interested in a holistic, and biblical concept of wisdom. Grenz argues (by referring to 1 Cor 8:1) that also in a biblical context “knowledge is good only when it facilitates a good result—specifically, when it fosters wisdom (or spirituality) in the knower . . . the Christian gospel is concerned not only with the reformulation of our intellectual commitments but also with the transformation of our character and the


173 Ibid.
renewal of our entire lives as believers.” Thus, postmodern holism with its quest for
authenticity calls for the living Word of God and an “incarnational missiology.”
Seeing and experiencing the transforming power of God as well as the actual story of the
life of Jesus Christ is a stronger argument for a postmodern to seek God than the teaching
of a coherent concept about God.

Despite the fact that postmodernism rejects absolute authority and an absolute
truth but rather embraces pluralism and relativism it has not closed the doors for God but
rather opened new ones. It is the task of the church by the leading of the Holy Spirit to
discern the new opportunities for the Gospel Commission. “If we care about evangelism,
then surely we need to get our bearings in this strange, postmodern world. If we wish to
preach and teach effectively, then we must be clear about where the sharp and double-
edged sword of the gospel cuts into the spirit of the age.”

**Implications for Evangelism**

Since “evangelism is the core, heart, or center of mission” it cannot become
obsolete for the Christian church in a postmodern context. Since “evangelism involves

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witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do”

178 evangelism in the postmodern context also includes the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the biblical message. Finally, the Christian Church is ever called “to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as Savior, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth.”

179 Nevertheless, the postmodern context is challenging the Christian church to reevaluate and redefine its actual evangelistic understanding. It is also a missional truth that different cultural contexts ask for different approaches. Webber is convinced that “in the postmodern world evangelism is shifting away from Enlightenment individualism to the more communal model of the early church.”

180 Many theological thinkers about evangelization in the current age support this view. In fact, it has been said that evangelism in the modern era, coined by Enlightenment anthropology and its revivalist emphasis on the individual, has “undermined the meaning of church.”

181 “In other words,” so Jones, “modern evangelistic methodology, particularly seen in youth evangelism, actually worked against the development of Christ’s body on earth because soul-winning was stressed over disciple-making.”

182 However, though Jones might a little bit overshoot the mark it is certainly true that by definition evangelism has first to be


179 Ibid., 17.

180 Webber, Ancient-Future Faith, 143.


182 Jones, Postmodern Youth Ministry, 120.

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seen in a communal and not an individual context. Finally, "evangelism is possible only when the community that evangelizes—the church—is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and has a winsome lifestyle." 183

Postmodernism with its emphasis on authenticity, community, and experience may actually help the church to see evangelism not just as an activity of the church but more profound in being church. 184 "The most important kind of witness the church can provide to non-Christians is the creation of a living, breathing community of faith in which its members really live out consistently the story of Jesus." 185

For postmodern evangelism, this means that truth is best communicated as it is lived in the life of a body of Christ out of its (his)story and its stories, not one-on-one combat via evidentiary apologetics. Instead, the church itself becomes the apologetic. As the truth of the gospel is worked out in the real lives of people living together in community, its veracity cannot be debated or individualized; its reality is something into which we may simply invite others to ‘come and see,’ and the church thereby becomes the center for evangelism. 186

"Third century evangelism," so Webber, "is local church evangelism par-excellence...it emanates from the local church and manifests a personal, caring touch in which a person is taken by the hand and walked through the various stages of growth and development into conversion." 187 Therefore, "the church needs to reinvent the concept of ‘connection’ and ‘connectedness’ to fit a postmodern context." 188

184 See Grenz, A Primer on Postmodernism, 167-169.
186 Fitch, The Great Giveaway, 57.
187 Webber, Ancient-Future Faith, 151.
188 Sweet, Postmodern Pilgrims, 119.
Such a shift of emphasis somehow forced by a postmodern mind-set calls evangelism back to a more holistic, process-oriented, and community-based concept and thus to an evangelistic method that deeply resonates with Scriptures and the church growth of the early Christians. It also resonates with the specific needs and expectations of youth. The postmodern shift thus can also foster a new emphasis on youth evangelism.

Postmodernism also challenges the church to reconsider the importance to contextualize the everlasting Gospel. This applies especially in regards to the emerging new generations. “To reach people in the new postmodern context, we must set ourselves to the task of deciphering the implications of postmodernism for the gospel . . . we must claim the new postmodern context for Christ by embodying the Christian faith in ways that the new generation can understand.”

Evangelism in a postmodern context and especially in attempting to reach young people certainly challenges traditional evangelistic methods. “The timeless message of truth should never be confused with ineffective methods. . . . The methods we use to reach teens today must be concise, relevant, and strong, just like the gospel presentations of the New Testament. They must resonate and relate while being convicting and convincing at the same time.”

The apostle Paul himself has taught the church that contextualization is needed in reaching people in various contexts. In Acts chapter 17 he gives an example in reaching out to people that live in a different philosophical and cultural context as the fellow Jews.

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In the first part of this chapter Paul is trying to reach Jews with an approach that is built around reasoning from the Scriptures. In the second part of Acts 17 Paul is actually using another approach as he is reaching out to Gentiles. Thereby, Paul steps beyond the borders of his ethnic, racial, and religious tradition and moves into other, uncommon areas of discourse and dialogue. In the way Paul is addressing the people of Athens and by referring to the altar dedicated to the unknown god Paul connects with the religion, worldview, and culture of the gentile people. Since he is not dealing with fellow Jews there is no reference to or arguing about Scriptures, instead, Paul is citing Greek literature. Obviously Paul is adapting his evangelistic method to the culture of the people he is trying to reach with the Gospel.\textsuperscript{191} Paul has established common ground with his listeners at Athens by citing familiar works of Greek philosophers and poets. In similar ways, according to Henderson, the church today should “establish common ground through popular culture.”\textsuperscript{192}

Although “the church must realize the necessity of framing the message in terms that the postmodern can grasp”\textsuperscript{193} it does so by adapting to the culture rather than assimilating the culture. Webber says that “there is an agreement that this new era demands two simultaneous approaches. The first is to \textit{stand over against} the world where the Christian faith is in conflict with cultural values. The second is to \textit{make}

\textsuperscript{191} Paul is looking for a cultural relevant opener to get the attention (the altar to the unknown god). He is introducing to his listeners the story of God from creation to salvation and resurrection. Paul approaches his listeners positively and affirms the reality of their search for God and that the living and loving God is close to everyone. Paul is identifying with his listeners (we are God’s offspring). Paul uses examples that connect with his listeners (your poets have said). Paul is witnessing Jesus.


\textsuperscript{193} Drummond, \textit{Reaching Generation Next}, 34.
connections with the culture where Christian faith and values are not challenged." In the light of the early Christians and their transforming presence in the pagan culture, Webber concludes that “Christians have a profound effect upon culture as they live in this paradoxical relationship—identified with it, yet living in antithesis to its ideologies.” The postmodern shift therefore also challenges the evangelizing church to become a transforming force itself as it reaches out, connects and interacts with young people. “The tension between the rejection of the ideologies of culture and the embrace of living in this culture allows the Christian to be a transforming presence in this post-Christian culture.”

However, in the end what matters most are authentic people of faith that relationally connect with young people. In a postmodern context and in regards to the young people of this age evangelism is less calling for new methods but rather for a new kind of church people, authentic followers of Christ building real communities of faith where God’s changing power is experienced and his word is lived as it is preached.

Summary

Although it can be said that youth evangelism has never been high on the missional agenda of the Christian church despite the fact that young people form the most receptive group of people the history of youth ministry reveals that youth evangelism always had a space in the backyard of the church. In fact, youth evangelism actually lies


195Ibid, 128.

196Ibid., 134.
at the bottom of youth ministry. Most of the youth ministries had been borne from a deep concern for young people in society. However, as youth ministry initiatives have evolved they have soon have been adapted and adopted by the church which finally morphed the initial evangelistic focus of reaching out to unchurched youth to a nurturing and protecting concern for the churched youth. Youth evangelism got into conflict with Christian youth education. In addition, in many cases the professionalized youth ministry more and more became program and numbers driven what in consequence also lowered the spiritual and biblical standards and lead to a felt lack of actual discipling. Anyway, the churches more or less delegated the care, nurturing, and empowering of youth to the youth ministries and youth pastors thus neglecting the fact that the church itself, as intergenerational community and family of God, is called to integrate and disciple its young people. Many representatives of youth ministry today are raising their voice in this respect and are calling for a relocation of youth ministry into the context of the local church community.

In a similar way youth ministry literature gets more and more concerned about the fact that the social and structural assimilation of young people into the local faith community has priority in respect to churched youth. But in the same way youth ministries and churches should rediscover their calling to relationally reach out to young people in society. Thereby incarnational and contextual concepts and approaches are highlighted. Such approaches actually correspond with basic postmodern paradigms as well as with basic needs and expectations of young people.
CHAPTER IV

YOUTH EVANGELISM INITIATIVE “LINK2LIFE”

Young people have to be in the missional focus of the church. In the light of the foundations for youth evangelism we can state that youth evangelism is not an option but a necessity for the Christian church. Although many youth ministries evolved in the sphere of Christianity previously marked by an evangelistic approach they soon morphed into a nurturing service for churched young people. Apart from youth ministry there was so far hardly any evangelistic attempt of the church to reach out to young people in society. Generally, past evangelistic approaches and campaigns were rather targeting the adult population—if they were deliberately targeting at all. Evangelism has been conducted by adults for adults, thereby often assuming that the people to reach are like the people who teach. In such an evangelistic paradigm young people were just assumed to be adults. Such has been the case for centuries.

However, from a socio-historical point of view the youth is rather a new but growing segment of society. Nevertheless, while the media as well as the economy have long detected young people as an important people group to reach and have even fostered an actual youth orientation and idealization in society the Christian church is just about to learn that young people are at the core of the Great Commission.

Although taking decisions is part of all phases of life the youth is considered to be the age of decision-making. The time of identity formation also includes the setting of
fundamental directions and values for the future life. The various approaches of
developmental psychology make it obvious that the emerging adult is going through
some life changing turmoil and rearranging. In the life stage during which the youth is
constructing his or her own narrative-self it is very crucial to personally get to know God
in Jesus Christ who calls young people to follow him and to understand life in the context
of God’s story of salvation and the Great Controversy.

Because of the obvious developmental changes the age of youth has historically
been considered to be the “natural” time of conversion. Although the historic paradigm
of a sudden and crisis driven conversion has been scientifically challenged it is still true
that adolescence and the experience of conversion are close companions. In fact,
empirical studies still suggest that most of the conversions respectively decisions for
Christ happen in the time of youth.

It has been stated that youth has become the largest and most dynamic unreached
people group and that adolescence is a primary and even foreign mission field that calls
for a cross-cultural and contextualized approach. Youth evangelism thus has to be on the
top of the churches missional agenda. Therefore the Adventist church in Germany and
Switzerland decided to step unto new territory and to organize the first youth Net-
evangelism in Europe called “Link2Life.”

The Evolution of Link2Life

The German speaking youth evangelism “Link2Life” has been an evangelistic
initiative of the youth ministries departments in Germany and Switzerland in the years
2002 and 2004. This evangelistic project was specifically designed to target youth within
the church and through them—in the context of friendship evangelism—also youth
outside the Adventist church who have a relational connection to Adventist young people. The concept of “Link2Life” as a satellite evangelism initiative was influenced by the broadcast based mass evangelistic approach of the Adventist church at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The Age of Adventist Satellite Evangelism to Reach “People”

A new chapter of evangelistic campaigns of the SDA Church had been opened when pastor Mark Finley started the first satellite evangelistic series called NET ‘95 that targeted North America. One year later the satellite evangelism initiative expanded and the following NET ‘96 has also been received outside of North America. The idea of satellite evangelism in North America was first faced with skepticism¹ in Europe. Besides all the technical challenges and necessary installations the idea of inviting people to church to watch a religious TV program and expecting them to respond positively to a foreign speaker displayed on a big screen was felt to be contradicting to the idea of personal evangelism. Nevertheless, it has been voted by the leaders of the Euro-Africa Division (EUD) to participate with NET ’96.² Thus, satellite evangelism reached the SDA churches in Europe.

Accustomed to the concept of satellite evangelism after NET ’95 and ’96 the churches in Europe and especially in the German speaking part were much more responding when NET ’98 with Pastor Dwight Nelson was initiated. NET ’98 was the “biggest and only truly global satellite campaign. It was broadcast in forty languages and


²Ibid., 144.
reached people in more than one hundred countries.\textsuperscript{3} NET '98 has been successful in the German speaking Europe. Being connected through satellite the churches also discovered a sense of belonging. Grace to NET '98 almost every local SDA church in the German speaking part of Europe was equipped with a satellite receiver, a big screen and a video projector. From a technical point of view everything was ready for further satellite campaigns.

Encouraged by the general success of NET '98 the two German Unions launched their own satellite campaign in 1999. Finally, NET '99 was decided to be the official German speaking evangelistic campaign not only for Germany but also for Switzerland (German speaking part) and Austria. The campaign was shortened from twenty-four presentations (NET '98) to ten presentations and the messages by Pastor Johann Gerhardt were rather inductively derived from existential questions than deductively from Adventist doctrines.\textsuperscript{4} A year later the Australian evangelist Geoff Youlden was conducting NET 2000 in Germany. He has declared to target especially people in the age between 25-45 years.\textsuperscript{5} However, there was no big difference to former NET campaigns and the participation of churches in the German speaking fields was lower than in the previous satellite campaigns. Whether the NET 2000 evangelism actually reached the targeted age group and whether it had a lasting impact is rather to question.

Nevertheless, the idea of satellite evangelism has not lost interest. Another

\textsuperscript{3}Thorp, \textit{Miracle Factor}, 102.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 184. NET '99 with Johann Gerhardt is nr. 18 in Thorp's chronological listing of "ATN Satellite Evangelism Events" between 1995-2005.

official German speaking NET campaign was conducted in 2001 with Pastor Matthias Mueller who was directing his messages towards people being “in search of” ("auf der Suche"). Mueller answered the question regarding his target group by saying that there is no such thing as a homogenous audience and that he hopes to help people to take another step in faith. So, in all the satellite evangelism campaigns so far the traditional target group paradigm was at work which refers generally to “people” who have not yet taken a decision for Christ or who are interested in the Christian faith. None of the evangelistic satellite campaigns was actually having the youth in view.

The Need for a Youth NET Initiative

To specifically reach youth with this new approach of broadcast based evangelism was a concern that already had been discussed during an informal meeting of the two German Union youth directors and myself (then the Swiss German Conference youth director) with Johann Gerhardt in the autumn of 1999 at Darmstadt, Germany (from where NET '99 had been broadcast). It was a mutual agreement that a future NET should be designed to specifically reach young people. The idea has been discussed at other places among youth leaders as well and it caught fire.

In the following year the German youth departments issued a working committee to study the question of a possible German Youth NET. This sub-committee, all

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6 See nr. 41 in Thorp’s listing of satellite evangelism. Thorp, 184.


8 That does not mean that churched young people did not respond positively to the NET evangelism initiatives.
members where German Conference youth leaders, met in October 24, 2000 at Friedensau Adventist University. While discussing the pros and cons of such an undertaking the committee elaborated some basic goals of a Youth NET and decided to continue with the idea of organizing a youth oriented satellite evangelism initiative in Germany.

It has been agreed to present the idea of a Youth NET at the forthcoming official annual German youth leaders meeting from November 20-21, 2000 in Kassel. During this youth leaders meeting the decision has been taken to officially pursue the planning of a Youth NET. At the meeting a list of possible speakers had been discussed. It has been decided to have one main speaker whose native tongue is German. Stephan Sigg was the first to ask and he accepted although his first language is Swiss German.

The sub-committee also discussed a basic concept of a Youth NET and proposed to plan six evenings at three subsequent weekends (Friday and Saturday evening). The Youth NET should be a live event broadcast via satellite to other places in the German speaking Europe. The initial idea was to change the live venue respectively the actual location from which to broadcast each weekend. One Youth NET life venue for a weekend could be located in the southern, one in the northern and another in the eastern part of Germany. Thus, the Youth NET would be on route and be closer connected to the different regions. Finally, it has been decided to elaborate a detailed plan for the Youth-NET envisioned for the year 2002 while in the meantime Friedbert Hartmann (Youth Leader of the South-German Union at that time) was asked to clarify the feasibility and

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9 Later, after it has been decided to have Stephan Sigg as the speaker of the Youth NET initiative the idea was slightly altered meaning to have two weekend locations in Germany and a third in Switzerland.
the general timing of the task (politically and technically).

In January 29, 2001, not only the Youth NET sub-committee but most of the German youth leaders came together at Kassel. The youth leaders agreed that the Youth NET should be part of a larger evangelistic strategy that includes regional and local evangelistic youth initiatives. Finally, the Youth NET should help to foster regular youth club meetings, youth small groups, or youth bistros. Each Youth NET weekend broadcast from a different part of Germany is followed by four weeks where local evangelistic initiatives and local youth meetings can take place. In the context of a long term strategy the Youth NET should foster a two weeks meeting rhythm for local youth clubs. Accordingly, a Youth NET weekend with two evening events on Friday and Saturday should be followed by two weeks of local youth evangelistic activities and a local youth meeting at the end of the two weeks. After the local youth meeting weekend another two weeks period should provide time for outreach activities with the aim to meet young people and promote the next upcoming Youth NET at the weekend ahead.

In this context also the idea of creating a specific Youth NET handbook has been discussed to help local youth groups to promote the Youth NET as well as to organize outreach activities and local youth group meetings. The handbook should not only contain information for youth groups regarding the advertisement, preparation, and conducting of the Youth NET on the local level but also material, ideas, and study guides for youth club meetings and bible-study based small groups for youth.

Main Evangelistic Objectives of the German Youth NET

During the first preliminary Youth NET planning meetings some of the basic ideas of the future Link2Life project have been discussed and elaborated that finally
formed the strategic framework for the more detailed planning. The main evangelistic objectives were:

- Reaching young people who have not yet taken a decision for Christ or who have distanced themselves from the SDA church as well as reaching unchurched youth (friends of SDA youth) in the age between 15-18 years.

- Addressing core needs of young people which are shared by all youth while at the same time witnessing our Bible based Christian faith in Jesus Christ (rousing faith, confirming faith, deepening faith).

- Including a plurality of program elements and allowing a high degree of interaction and involvement instead of just having a "talking-head" giving a sermon.

- Being culturally sensitive and adaptive while meeting the youth in a relevant way where they are.

- Nurturing a spirit of mission and involve as many youth as possible in evangelism in their churches and among their friends.

- Promoting and supporting local youth as agents and leaders of mission in the church who effectively organize and lead an official evangelistic campaign of their church.

- Strengthening the work and mission of existing youth clubs and helping local youth to initiate and found new youth clubs or youth small groups in churches where so far there was no local youth ministry.

- Fostering a sense of belonging and a corporate identity as Adventist Youth in the general context of small churches and youth clubs in Germany.
Challenging the SDA church to be more intentional in focusing its evangelistic endeavors and resources on reaching young people.

Elaboration of the Motto and the Basic Concept

The preliminary discussions and estimations of the Youth NET sub-committee revealed that there is a serious desideratum for an evangelistic strategy to reach young people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Kassel meeting at the end of January 2001, where most of the German youth leaders were present (Union and Conference leaders), can be seen as the actual beginning of a Youth NET evangelism planning for the German speaking fields in Europe.

The next youth leaders meeting on March 15, 2001 to discuss more in detail the actual timing and concept of the youth evangelism involved for the first time Stephan Sigg, the proposed speaker and youth director of the Swiss German Conference as well as the youth director of the Austrian Union. Also two representatives of the German media center “Voice of Hope” were present to assist in the reflection of the infrastructural and technical requirements and to give some guidance regarding the producibility of the many ideas and possible elements that came to the table by the youth leaders. At the meeting the basic concept of three weekends à two evening events has been accepted and the Youth NET weekends have been scheduled to October 11 and 12, November 08 and 09, and December 06 and 07 in 2002. Stephan Sigg has been officially voted to be the speaker of the Youth NET evangelism.

The committee also discussed a promotion strategy for the Youth NET and to use already planned and scheduled youth events to prepare youth leaders and the youth for the upcoming evangelistic campaign. Especially the next National Youth Leaders
Training in February 2002 as well as the National Youth Camp in May 2002 should be strategically used to promote the Youth NET evangelism.

The next scheduled planning meeting on May 9, 2001 was used to discuss the various aspects and tasks of the Youth NET and to assign individuals (most of them youth leaders) to specific responsibilities and to work groups. The main responsible Youth NET team would be the assembly of all youth leaders of the German speaking fields. \(^{10}\) Important strategic or conceptual decisions or general issues regarding content had to be taken by the main assembly of youth leaders to ensure that the project is solidary supported by all involved fields.

The following major responsibilities and work groups have been assigned as areas of responsibility and as work groups of the main assembly: Advertisement, Clip production, Finances, Follow-up, Handbook, Internet/Website, on-site Logistics, Moderation & Presenter, Music, Screenplay, Stage setting, Technics and Production.

The various work groups and responsibilities have been confirmed at the Youth NET meeting of the youth leaders assembly in October 22, 2001. Martin Knoll has been voted to be the main coordinator of the evangelistic project. The meeting discussed the three different venues for the Youth NET weekends as well as the basic music concept.

A month later on November 15, 2001 the youth leaders assembly was discussing

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\(^{10}\)The German assembly of youth leaders at that time had as leaders Martin Knoll (North German Union), Friedbert Hartmann (South German Union) and as members, Michael Brunotte (North Rhine-Westphalia Conference), Werner Dullinger (Middle Rhine Conference), Thilo Foth (Hansa Conference), Stephan Igler (Baden-Wuerttemberg Conference), Thomas Knirr (North Bavaria Conference), Ulf Röder (Lower Saxony & Bremen), Gunnar Scholz (Berlin-Brandenburg Conference), Jochen Streit (South Bavaria Conference), Lars Uhlmann and Jörg Wietrichowsky (both Central German Conference). Switzerland was represented by Stephan Sigg (Swiss German Conference). Austria was only present at the meeting on March 15 in 2001. The Austrian Union decided not to be officially involved in the planning and conduct of the Youth NET.
the concept of six sermons and themes proposed by the speaker in written form in an e-mail to all German youth leaders from November 8, 2001. The themes proposed have been geared to the adolescents’ experience of life and to their attitude to life. Our faith in Jesus Christ should be witnessed and approached inductively and not deductively or dogmatically. Sigg argued:

Regarding the content of the evenings: I will basically come from the attitude of life and the life environment of the teenager. It is not about a dogmatic approach but rather an existential one. Of course, by coming from the existential level I will try to give answers respectively invitations that connect to God/Jesus. Basically, I want to inspire the youth with excitement for God. The basic tenor of the message is joy and hope, or simply Good News!

During this meeting the team of youth leaders was looking for a more catchy title for the Youth NET evangelism. From the many ideas the term “Link2Life” has been chosen by the assembly to designate the youth evangelistic initiative. The term is a compound with a meaning. “Link” is a term that refers to the world of the internet. You follow or click on a link and suddenly a new page opens. This metaphor was used not only to characterize the main purpose of the evangelism—to serve young people as a link that leads to Christ—but to refer to Jesus himself who is the living and ultimate link to life. The main theme for the Link2Life (L2L) evangelism in 2002 was voted to be “Jump in.” Jumping is an expression of young people. They jump with skateboards, snowboards, bikes, freestyle ski, etc. Jumping is also an expression of excitement. But it is also a challenge. “Jump in” takes up these associations and connects them with the invitation to jump into a life with Jesus and follow the ultimate link to life.

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11For the list of the 2002 topics or themes see Volume 2, Appendix L.

12Stephan Sigg, e-mail message to the German youth leader assembly, November 8, 2001.

The November meeting in Freudenstadt also decided to produce the Link2Life-handbook so that all the local youth leaders can have it as a tool for the local planning and event organization in 2002. The handbook was a folder that could be constantly extended and enhanced. It has also been decided to publish a monthly Link2Life Newsletter starting in January 2002 to promote the evangelism and share new information with the local youth groups.

During a next planning meeting on December 20, 2001 questions regarding layout, corporate design and logo have been on the agenda as well as a more detailed concept of the Website and the communication and promotion of the event. Each conference and field were asked to elaborate regional plans and concepts to promote the year 2002 as a youth year with a specific evangelistic focus and to establish regional planning committees. The conferences should as well start to list all the youth groups respectively churches and locations that are going to participate in the evangelistic Link2Life initiative.

Thus, by the end of 2001 the conceptual and thematic framework for the first European satellite youth evangelism has been elaborated. With the beginning of 2002 all the work groups worked on the various responsibilities and areas at full speed. Between January and October 2002 another six planning meetings of the youth leaders assembly respectively the Link2Life organizing team were scheduled alongside of various sub-committee and work-group meetings.

14 See Volume 2, Appendix R to see how the Link2Life handbook or folder looked like.
Promotion of Link2Life Among SDA Youth

There were two strategically important German youth events for the promotion of Link2Life among the SDA youth in the first half of 2002. The national youth leaders training from February 10 to 17, 2002 offered an excellent opportunity to motivate the local youth leaders for the evangelism. Stephan Sigg has been responsible for the devotions and in workshops the young people and youth leaders could discuss and elaborate ideas for the realization of Link2Life in the local churches and youth groups as well as give creative input to each evening and its thematic focus.

The national youth camp from May 8 to 15, 2002 provided another possibility to promote Link2Life and introduce its speaker. The national youth camp also offered a great opportunity to organize a casting. All Conferences had been asked to select candidates, female and male youth, as possible moderators or presenters of Link2Life and thus as stage partners of the speaker. The German Voice of Hope organized a casting during the national youth camp and the candidates that have been suggested by their Conference youth leaders had to accomplish several tasks behind and in front of the camera. It was the aim to have three young people leading through the actual Link2Life program. A youth couple (male and female) was to present the various program elements, leading the talks with special guests and to open and close the evening events. A third youth was to moderate the “computer corner,” an element in the Link2Life program that was used to communicate and to be in a direct contact with the local youth.

15 Stephan Sigg was voted to be the main speaker at this national youth event. Being the Swiss German youth director at that time Sigg was hardly known among the youth in Germany. The idea was that by getting to know Stephan Sigg as a speaker the youth would be more ready to promote Link2Life, get involved and invite friends and peers to the actual L2L weekend events.
groups. When finally three youth passed the casting and had been chosen to be the moderation or presenter team of Link2Life 2002 (two male and a female youth) they have been presented to the hundreds of young people at the end of the national camp meeting. The national youth camp heightened the expectation and pleasant anticipation of Link2Life.

For the further promotion of Link2Life in 2002 a monthly newsletters and handbook for local youth leaders had been published; a special and interactive Website had been launched; flyers and posters had been printed; give-away material and T-shirts had been produced; and a VIP prayer card (like a credit card) had been issued. Each SDA youth should have such a prayer card in his pocket and to write the names of their personal very important persons whom they would like to invite for the Link2Life evangelism. The prayer card should remind them to pray daily for these personal VIPs as well as for the upcoming evangelistic event.

In the course of planning Link2Life 2002 several ambitious ideas for the evangelism had to be adjusted or abandoned due to financial or practical reasons. Among such was the idea to have a central stage at the life venues in order to allow the speaker to move in all directions. Also the idea to have three different Link2Life venues—two in Germany and one in Switzerland—had to be altered. To cross the border with all the stage and technical equipment would have been too complex and expensive. Finally the decision has been taken to organize the first Link2Life weekend in the Adventist church

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16See Volume 2, Appendix R for a picture of the VIP prayer card.
Berlin-Charlottenburg and the second and third in the Marienhoehe church at Darmstadt.\textsuperscript{17}

The German and Swiss German youth department leaders, the German Voice of Hope, and many local youth teams and volunteers have been working with an extraordinary effort\textsuperscript{18} for the long-awaited moment when Link2Life went on air for the first time in October 11, 2002 from the Berlin-Charlottenburg church. For everyone involved the first Link2Life evening was a new experience. Almost 190 different churches and youth groups with more than 5000 attendees have been connected via satellite with the life venue to participate and listen to the first message with the challenging theme “Choose or Lose.”

The Link2Life 2002 evangelism has been attended by an average number of 5725 youth per evening. In the time in between the Link2Life weekends many local youth groups organized additional events and “street actions” \textit{(Strassenaktionen)}. Some youth groups rented for instance a trampoline to put it in a central place of their town to invite young people—according to the Link2Life motto—to “jump.” Thus, the local groups were not just attending the Link2Life evenings rather the whole time in between the Link2Life weekends was used to promote the evangelism and to organize local activities.

\textsuperscript{17}At that time Darmstadt has been the place of business of the German Voice of Hope and thus all the logistics regarding technics and the actual production was less complicated and expensive. The respective church boards and members accepted that their sanctuary was converted into a film studio with a lot of technics, a huge stage, and a life audience.

\textsuperscript{18}It should be noted that the year 2002 was an ordinary youth year for all the youth departments. Link2Life therefore demanded an extra effort in order to accomplish the additional work and responsibility for the realization of this youth evangelism. None of the leaders was in any way exempt by the church administration from his usual departmental work and responsibilities, the speaker included.
This may be one of the reasons why the number of youth attendees raised from the first to the second weekend.19

After Link2Life is before Link2Life

The first youth satellite evangelism was not even finished when the discussion started to soon plan a second Link2Life evangelism. In the week before the last Link2Life 2002 weekend, from December 2 to 3, there was a conjoined meeting of both German Union boards called “GiD.”20 The GiD had already voted an evangelism planning for the German fields up to the year 2007 in a previous meeting. The evangelism planning was based on the NET strategy. The five-year planning scheduled another “general” NET evangelism for 2003 with pastor Johann Gerhardt and for 2004 there was a NET evangelism envisaged with a focus on health under the responsibility of the DVG (Deutscher Verein für Gesundheit) and the health departments.21

Although the plans for the evangelism of the coming years in Germany were made and voted there a new discussion arouse. The GiD meeting was taking place in a time when in the German churches young people, pastors and church members were involved in the Link2Life evangelism and good reports were coming. Due to the very positive and encouraging response of the youth groups and churches, the high percentage

19For more information consult the Evaluation chapter.

20In Germany both Union boards meet together each year on a regular basis. The meetings used to be called “GiD” (Gemeinschaft in Deutschland), today it is called “FiD” (Freikirche in Deutschland). At the GiD respectively FiD meetings also the Euro-Africa Division is present.

21According to the GiD minutes the following NET strategy for Germany has been voted:
- “NET 2003” evangelism with pastor Johann Gerhardt
- 2004 Health NET evangelism lead by the DVG
- “NET 2005” evangelism with a speaker not yet appointed
- 2006 Marriage and Family NET evangelism
- “NET 2007” evangelism with a speaker not yet appointed
of actual guests who attended the evangelism (compared to previous evangelisms) and the good results in terms of numbers of youth asking for Bible study with a pastor and decisions of young people for baptism the church administrators in Germany voted to have another Link2Life youth evangelism in 2004.\textsuperscript{22} Thus the GiD altered the evangelistic planning knowing that the health departments were not pleased to see their “Health NET” postponed.

When soon after the Link2Life 2002 event the assembly of the German youth leaders met in January 20, 2003 for a feedback and first evaluation the youth leaders were already faced with the GiD vote to plan another Link2Life in 2004. Although the Link2Life 2002 evangelism was a very positive and blessed experience for the involved youth departments and leaders there was a certain fatigue. However, the vote of the GiD was received with great pleasure and satisfaction and thus the last meeting in the context of Link2Life 2002 became also the first meeting for Link2Life 2004.

Link2Life 2004 – Different but Still the Same

The German and Swiss German youth departments could start the planning of Link2Life 2004 with a new but good experience in the back. A first opportunity to talk about Link2Life 2004 was given by the regular German youth department leaders meeting on March 26, 2003 in Muehlenrahmede. All youth leaders were in favor of another Link2Life youth evangelism and there was a unanimous agreement that the basic concept of Link2Life regarding structure, method, and content does not have to be questioned. Link2Life 2004 therefore could be based and built on the foundation of

\textsuperscript{22}The number of votes to alter the evangelism planning and to replace the “Health NET” scheduled for 2004 with another Youth NET was 27 in favor, 1 against, and 7 abstentions.
Link2Life 2002. During the meeting some reflections have been made regarding the speaker, the frequency of evening events, and possible locations for the live venue.

When the German youth department leaders met again in Stuttgart on May 5, 2003 the decision has been taken to ask again Stephan Sigg to be the speaker of the Link2Life evangelism and Martin Knoll to be the coordinator of the project. The youth leaders also agreed to enhance but at the same time to condense the evangelism. Now, the plan was to have four (instead of three) Link2Life weekends each with two evening events on Friday and Saturday. But there should be less time in between the Link2Life events. The idea was to have a bloc of two subsequent Link2Life weekends followed by two weeks off and another bloc of two subsequent Link2Life weekends. The time in between the two blocs of Link2Life events can be used for local outreach activities.

During this May meeting also the decision has been taken to have only one live venue for the production of the evangelism. With the experience of Link2Life 2002 Darmstadt respectively the Marienhoehe church has been seen to be the best location for Link2Life. The assembly also discussed a better working structure. Instead of having all discussions and decisions regarding Link2Life in the assembly of all the German youth department leaders a smaller Link2Life working committee of five people (two of each German Union and one from the Swiss German Conference) should be installed that meets regularly and coordinates all tasks. The assembly of all youth department leaders would thus only discuss the more general and strategic issues.

During the next Link2Life meeting in July 10, 2003 the new working structure and its members have been voted. The smaller Link2Life project team finally consisted of six peoples including a representative from the German Media House "Voice of Hope"
and the speaker of Link2Life 2004. The team was obliged to report all its actions and decisions to the assembly of all youth department leaders. Besides the project team also a program team was appointed to deal more creatively with the actual Link2Life program and script. As a key figure who finally coins the content of the evangelism the speaker was a member of all working groups.

The assembly of the youth department leaders met again in September 15, 2003 to discuss and assign major responsibilities (most on the basis of Link2Life 2002) and some key points regarding organization, program structure, and music. Since the expression “Link2life” has become widely known and served as a brand for NET based youth evangelism there was only brainstorming to find a new slogan as a substitute for “Jump in.”

When the project team met for the first time in September 25 the choice fell on the term “Trust” as a guiding theme for the second Link2Life youth evangelism. Trust is an elementary component of human life and the basic concept of faith. As Link2Life 2002 also in 2004 the main purpose was to invite young people to find trust in God through Jesus and to entrust their life to the creator and redeemer of life.

Several elements of the first Link2Life evangelism could be adopted for the second production. The handbook for participating youth groups and churches only had to be adjusted and slightly enhanced. The prayer cards could be “reactivated.” The website and the basic layouts could be inherited and continued. The advertisement and communication strategy was working fine the first time and could be followed again. Although the speaker has not changed it was agreed that a new moderation or presenter
team had to be casted in cooperation with the German media house Voice of Hope.\textsuperscript{23}

When in November 2003 the project team met again the members did vote the draft of the new topical concept of Stephan Sigg for the eight events.\textsuperscript{24} Because Link2Life 2004 has been designed in the same way as Link2Life 2002 as a youth evangelistic "invitation initiative" the themes of Link2Life 2004 have not been a topical continuation of the Link2Life 2002 topics but rather the themes have followed the same rationale and philosophy. Real life issues that young people can relate with are to be connected with biblical stories focusing on Jesus Christ. Young people are invited to "trust" Jesus because he is the link to real and fulfilling life.

Regarding the actual Link2Life program it was the common consensus to rethink the basic script and layout of the program. Thereby it was agreed that the various program elements should be better knitted together than the last time so that everything is in a certain way referring to the particular topics of the sermons and supporting the actual message. Therefore the topical concept and the main foci of the eight evenings had to be defined first. The task to elaborate a basic Link2Life program setting and script has been referred to the program team while the project team rather dealt with the organization and the logistics.

The program team started its first meeting on December 8, 2003 and met five times until the end of March 2004.\textsuperscript{25} Besides the preaching the program team decided to

\textsuperscript{23}The youth presenter team from Link2Life 2002 has been doing great. Nevertheless, a new team was needed since someone was not available for 2004 and because this time we also wanted to have someone from Switzerland in the presenter team.

\textsuperscript{24}For a list of the Link2Life topics 2004 see Volume 2, Appendix L.

\textsuperscript{25}Some of the meetings were organized as telephone conferences.
continue with some other basic program elements of Link2Life 2002 like the talk guest(s), video clip, music band, computer desk (interaction with the local venues and youth groups), live chat (as a program afterglow). The program team, however, played quite some time also with the idea to have an outside broadcast van with a presenter and a camera team that is visiting a local Link2Life venue. Thus, it would have been possible to go live to that outside presenter and have a live interaction with the youth assembled at the respective local venue. Mainly due to financial reasons this idea had to be abandoned later.

While during Link2Life 2002 the music concept was based on the idea to invite for each event another music band or musicians, some of which known in the contemporary Christian music scene, it has been decided this time to work with just one Link2Life band that is going to play music and songs. Together with the responsible for Music, Erhard Dan, Stephan Sigg has to agree on the actual selection of songs and music since also the music and songs should be connected to the actual messages.

Another idea that actually had been produced was the “Link2Life soap.” Instead of pre-producing a play or sketch that is connected to the message young people should perform a play live on the stage. As a steady element of the Link2Life program the play was intended to work like a TV soap opera or sitcom. For that reason not only a team of youth actors was needed but also a specific set for the Link2Life stage. Finally, the program team decided that whole Link2Life stage would serve as the set for the “Link2Life soap.” Thus, the stage was designed to be an Internet Café as the location where a clique of youth was meeting regularly. The Internet Café gave room for several different areas like the bar where someone could get an alcohol free Link2Life drink, a
seating area with small tables, a lounge, a stage with a live band, and a computer desk area. This stage setting allowed the presenters as well as the speaker to change location and move in between the different areas. The Link2Life talk could be located in the lounge or also at the restaurant tables. The computer desk also had its place integrated in the set. The soap had an ongoing story line. Nevertheless, each of the eight parts focusing on the life reality of youth and the interactions and relationships of the peers in this Internet Café clique was also leading to respectively highlighting the theme or main message of the actual sermon that was about to follow. The script has been written by a professional Adventist screenplay author in close cooperation with the speaker. The youth actors were casted and taken from an actual theater group of the Marienhoehe Adventist high school which is actually located at the same place as the Marienhoehe church serving as the Link2Life broadcast venue.

A casting was also needed to find three new presenters for Link2Life. All the Conference youth leaders could suggest youth from their fields and send them to a casting event to the Marienhoehe, Germany. The casting was scheduled for January 11, 2004 and 22 candidates showed up. The Voice of Hope together with the Link2Life coordinator and the speaker finally made a choice that fell on two girls from Germany and one boy from Switzerland. Whereas in 2002 the presenters had their specific jobs the presenters for Link2Life 2004 were meant to interact more and change tasks (not always the same are welcoming, or leading the talks, or being at the computer desk, etc.). Since the moderator team had been selected early in 2004 there was enough time to schedule some training weekends and also to give them the opportunity to practice during a national German youth rally and a Conference youth Sabbath in Switzerland.
The ideas of the program team had to be adjusted by the project team as well as by the assembly of all the German youth department leaders. When already on May 24, 2004 the assembly met for a last time before the actual Link2Life evangelism most of the basic concepts regarding advertisement, program, and logistics have been settled. This was necessary since in summer 2004 all the youth leaders and youth departments were absorbed by the first Pan-European Adventist Youth Congress organized by both Divisions, the EUD and the TED, in Wroclaw (Poland). After this important summer event time was short and the last preparatory works had to be completed including the building of the stage and set for the Link2Life production. Finally, everything was ready for the second Link2Life youth evangelism. In the end, the Link2Life 2004 evangelism has been engaging 175 local youth groups and churches in youth evangelism. The average number of attendance was 4321 people. The average percentage of actual visitors was 23.8%. Although the total number of participants was lower in 2004 than during the Link2Life 2002 evangelism the percentage of actual visitors was remarkably higher.

After the actual Link2Life 2004 evangelism was over the youth could still be connected to the event through the Link2Life website. As an afterglow there was an Advent calendar online that provided each day up to Christmas a little surprise for all website visitors like short backstage or production clips, short devotions and on the 24. December there was another message of the Link2Life speaker. The calendar was introduced and advertised during the last Link2Life weekend at the beginning of December. However, the actual follow-up was in the hands of the local pastors and youth leaders.
Methods of Link2Life

The Link2Life youth evangelization is rather a complex combination of various elements and endeavors than just a single evangelistic method. Based on the NET evangelism Link2Life was a multi-media approach to communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to young people and inviting them to entrust their lives to the Father in Heaven.

NET-Evangelism as a New Form of Event Evangelism

Link2Life can be seen as mass evangelism. Reid says that "in a general sense, mass evangelism refers to any gospel message presented to a crowd." The history of evangelism proofs mass evangelism to be very effective and Reid is convinced that "mass evangelism still works." Unlike classic mass evangelism where people from a region and often from several churches met at one single and central location NET evangelism basically gathered groups of people at different locations to listen to one evangelist preaching from one host location by using broadcast and satellite technology. Thus, the Youth NET “Link2Life” did not only create one single evangelistic event but many. Each local venue where young people came together was an event not only shaped by the Link2Life program but also by the local youth groups.

Besides the evangelistic program broadcast and projected to a screen each local venue respective the responsible youth group organized their own framework program that was different from location to location. However, there were several specific event features of Link2Life that were shared by all locations and belonged to the general event

26Reid, Evangelism Handbook, 333.

27Ibid., 336.
concept to foster the specific Link2Life community spirit.

First, each youth group or church arranged the meeting room with small tables and with chairs to create a bistro or club atmosphere. Several churches even organized sofas and other special furniture. Although many local venues were in church buildings the Link2Life event was not happening in a classical church atmosphere. Wherever possible the local venues did not use the main worship room or the sanctuary but rather another suitable room. This also allowed the local youth to be more creative.

The local youth groups were encouraged to decorate the local venue in a special Link2Life-way. Some even adjusted their decoration every time to the actual topic of the evening or organized a short sketch or play to introduce the program that followed on the screen. Pictures of the decoration and the people of the local venues that were sent to the Link2Life office had been shown during the Link2Life live program. Thus, local groups could see what others are during and felt connected not only to the host venue but also to the many Link2Life venues in Germany and Switzerland.

Another common event feature shared by all local Link2Life venues was the computer corner. In order to be connected with the main venue the local venues did not only have a satellite connection to receive the official program but they also provided Internet access and installed a computer corner at their location. Thus, visitors and guest could go online to the Link2Life website and check the newest features, look at the pictures coming from all the different venues, or write a short text to greet people right on site before or after the main program. Short texts and greeting messages sent to the Link2Life office in the time before the main program started were almost immediately broadcast and appeared on all the screens. During the Link2Life 2002 evangelism these
short greetings were shown during the mini-concert that was broadcast from the main venue.\textsuperscript{28} The computer corner at the local venues had also been very busy right after the official broadcast was over. After each Link2Life program several chat rooms had been activated and the youth could chat with the Link2Life presenters, the speaker, and with the special talk guests or musicians of that respective evening program.

Another common event feature of the local venues during the Link2Life 2004 evangelism were the Link2Life bars. The bar concept at the local venues corresponded with the Internet café setting at the life venue. The youth at the local venues could order the same drinks that were served at the live venue during the program and especially in the context of the Link2Life soap. There was a common list of recipes for non-alcoholic drinks offered at all the Link2Life venues.

The event character of the Link2Life evangelism was also supported by the possibility to participate in various activities. During the Link2Life 2002 evangelism for instance young people had the opportunity to participate in a short clip contest that was related to the fourth topic “All You Need is Love.” A selection committee evaluated all the clips produced by young people and the three best short clips have been presented and shown during the “All You Need is Love” program.

The main idea, however, was to foster among all the youth at the many local venues a sense of community.\textsuperscript{29} Nevertheless, it was the evangelistic message that was at the center of the Link2Life initiative.

\footnote{For an explanation of the mini concert see section “Engaging the Arts.”}

\footnote{See Volume 2, Appendix S for a few impressions of some Link2Life venues in Switzerland.}
The Evangelistic Preaching of Link2Life

Despite all the creative and multimedia elements the sermon has always been at the center of the Link2Life events. Communicating the Gospel and witnessing Jesus is not an option in any evangelistic endeavor but its heart. "Most of the great movements in church history have depended on preaching to accomplish their purposes," says Edwards in his history of preaching. This is especially true regarding any of the Christian revivals. In fact, "evangelistic preaching was the form of the earliest Christian proclamation, beginning with the apostles at Pentecost." The universal prerequisites of effective evangelistic preaching, according to Drummond, can be seen in the Christocentric content of the proclamation, the communicative methodology used to make the message relevant, and in the personality of the evangelistic preacher.

Preaching Christ

The first basic principles of effective preaching and in particular evangelistic preaching can be seen in the content of the proclamation that "must be a clear-cut, positive presentation of the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ." Christ must be at the center of the message and the Gospel is for all preachers "required speech."

Preaching Christ is in fact the very nature of an evangelistic proclamation. Mark

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31 Ibid., 774.
33 Ibid., 89.
Dever says that basically an evangelistic sermon is not determined “by our motives or the results afterwards or by setting or the style, the time or the place” but rather it is determined by its content, whether the evangel—the good news—is present. Thus Dever concludes that the “question of content is above all the question that determines whether a sermon is truly evangelistic.” Therefore, evangelistic preaching is first and foremost focused on presenting and witnessing Christ to non-Christians in such a way that they can understand and see Jesus as the God whom they can trust their lives.

This was the main motive of the Link2Life proclamations and it has also been expressed by the main slogans of the Link2Life evangelism. While “Jump in” in 2002 was a positive invitation to a life with Jesus the slogan “Trust” in 2004 referred to the basic nature of faith (pistis). Since we as human beings “cannot avoid commitment to a basic trust, one that lies beyond our proof and beyond our capacity to eradicate it” the central question is what or better whom we trust. Such a question is especially relevant in the time of adolescence. The evangelistic proclamation of Jesus Christ can be seen as a trust or confidence-building measure. To see the Christian faith first in the context of trust rather than in the context of believing or considering truths is vital to understand evangelistic preaching primarily as invitation to a relationship rather than as an argument for ‘the truth.’ In essence it could even be said that the Bible is less “about what to believe but in whom one will trust . . . Salvation is found in a personal encounter with


36Ibid.

Such a connotation of Christian faith is not only biblical but also relates to a postmodern mindset. The invitation to trust Jesus Christ was the bottom line of the Link2Life proclamation.

The Communicative Method and Contextualization

An effective communicative methodology is essential for evangelistic preaching and it assumes a sensitive awareness of the preaching situation. The preaching situation refers not only to the nature of the listeners but also to their predominant cultural context. Therefore “biblical preachers are challenged to constantly discern a biblical mandate from a cultural suggestion.” Evangelistic communication to young people is always in need of a threefold exegesis, an exegesis of Scriptures as well as an exegesis of the shared culture and the specific life situation of adolescents. Basically, “preachers must get to know postmoderns, understand them, and address them to their level.” Finally, a positive response to the message preached during a youth evangelistic event can only be expected if it is communicated in a way that makes sense to the young people in ‘their world.’ This is not an easy task. In fact, many pastors today state that “one of their greatest ministry challenges is ‘reaching people with the gospel in today’s world.’” This challenge is even more obvious when it comes to reaching youth. Young people are

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40 Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next*, 89.

by nature always closer to the cutting edge of culture than the adult generations.

In general it can be said that effective evangelistic communication cannot ignore cultural conditions and differences and needs to contextualize the gospel message. "We must increasingly consider how to contextualize the gospel,"\textsuperscript{42} says Alvin Reid. This is especially true since culture is a changing human phenomenon in any society and cultural changes happen faster than in the past. In addition, the predominant culture of a society is accompanied by various subcultures shared by different groups of people. Although, there is no such thing as a single youth subculture from a developmental point of view as well as on the basis of the predominant media driven culture adolescents share many things in common. Targeting young people with the gospel message therefore demands an awareness of the specific needs of young people and their own living context.

"Preachers must think carefully as to how the material will be presented in order to create interest and involve the listener effectively in the communication process. Understanding postmodern people and their struggles is merely a prerequisite to connecting with them."\textsuperscript{43}

This corresponds with the basic evangelistic rule that "any attempt to preach the gospel involves using the language spoken by the hearers."\textsuperscript{44} That does not mean that connecting with young people as an adult means to artificially adopt a specific youth slang. Young people would not respond positively to that since it lacks authenticity.


\textsuperscript{43}Johnston, \textit{Preaching to a Postmodern World}, 75.

Finally, language is not just a matter of terms and expressions it is about a way of understanding. Applied to youth evangelism this basic evangelistic rule rather refers to the fact that the preacher must have an understanding of the world young people live in and knows how to refer to the adolescent life experience. “Before one can bring meaning and relevance to the listener,” says Graham Johnston, “the preacher must gain entry into his or her sphere of understanding. This speaks of the incarnational ministry of Christ, who first entered our realms so that we might enter His realm.”45 In the theological concept of incarnational evangelism contextualization and relevance are mandatory. Tex Sample therefore suggests that for the church and its missional calling the issue is not just relevance but incarnation. “When so called ‘traditional’ churches are out of touch with the people who live around them, the problem is not that they are irrelevant, but that they are not incarnational.”46 Thus, contextualization is part of an incarnational evangelistic approach and involves an evangelistic preaching that connects with the listeners in a relevant way.

Connecting with people and specifically adolescents through preaching can only happen, according to David Henderson, when there is both actual relevance and functional relevance.47 While actual relevance means that a message needs to have anything to do with the hearer’s life functional relevance means that the hearer also needs to see and understand the message’s pertinence. Relevant preaching to youth, thus, does not only communicate a relevant message but it also enables the adolescent to see its

45 Johnston, Preaching to a Postmodern World, 68.
47 Henderson, Culture Shift, 24.
connection to his or her life. In order to be functionally relevant the actual relevance of a message needs to be contextualized. Ignoring functional relevance would not only make youth evangelism ineffective but it would also be a disrespect of young people. David Bosch is certainly right to say that “authentic evangelism is always contextual. . . . An evangelism which separates people from their context views the world not as a challenge but as a hindrance, devalues history, and has eyes only for the ‘spiritual’ or ‘nonmaterial aspects of life’ . . . is spurious.”

However, contextualizing the gospel and making the message relevant does not mean to change the Gospel. The biblical message of Jesus Christ is not ruled by cultural contexts. It is an “everlasting Gospel” (Rev 14:6) and it refers to a human situation and to human needs that are not culturally conditioned and have not changed over the centuries. “We can be confident,” says Thomas Schreiner, “that when we proclaim the gospel, its truth echoes in every heart.” Relevant preaching is therefore also biblical preaching. The biblical message does have actual relevance. Young people need to see that. Therefore, relevant evangelistic preaching to young people does not only connect with their cultural context but it also connects their basic needs with the biblical message. The communicative method of Link2Life was attempting to preach Scripture in such a way that it is identifying and “uncovering the area of human need within a passage of

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Scripture50 and then applying it to the life situation of adolescents in a way that leads them "to hear what the Bible says."51

The transfer of the actual relevance of Scripture to functional relevance is dependent on the ability of the preacher to link the life reality of the biblical times with the life reality of today's people. Therefore, the life reality of young people as well as their specific human needs have to be identified and connected to the life reality of the people in biblical times. In order to do that the preacher has to detect in a biblical story or passage "the mutual life environment that contemporary believers and unbelievers share in common with those to or about whom the biblical text was written."52

The evangelistic preaching in the context of the Link2Life initiatives has been a missional attempt to specifically reach adolescents and build a bridge into their lives. Ron Hutchcraft has identified "five life-saving imperatives"53 that build the mission bridge to young people. The first missional imperative is: Focus on Jesus. Young people are not interested in a denominational belief system but first and foremost in the person of Jesus Christ. The second imperative is: Start with their need. Hutchcraft sees a direct connection between the needs and the human problem of sin. Although the basic problem of humanity is sin it is not what young people are concerned about. However, despite the lack of awareness of sin "the results of sin are very much an issue."54

50Johnston, Preaching to a Postmodern World, 72.
51Ibid.
52Eswine, Preaching to a Post-Everything World, 28.
54Ibid., 41.
people see the symptoms of sin in their every day life. Hutchcraft says that if we begin with the symptoms of sin the youth are familiar with then they can be lead to understand the actual "disease" and "then introduce to them the cure provided by Jesus Christ." The proclamation of the Link2Life was not avoiding addressing sin. The proclamation of the Gospel was based on the conviction that youth evangelism also means to help young people understand the reality of sin as a prerequisite for understanding salvation in Jesus Christ. Charles Shelton says:

It is essential that adults convey the meaning of sinfulness to adolescents in ways filled with compassionate sensitivity and loving guidance. Yet, the very fact of sin needs clear articulation. In short, if we downplay a young person's capacity for sin, we run the risk of depriving the adolescent of the enriching experience of personal forgiveness that is the central reality of Jesus' redemptive message. Youth are ill-served by well-intentioned but misdirected efforts that fail to stress the empowering richness of the Christian mystery of forgiveness.

The third imperative is: Package it attractively. Hutchcraft refers to the fact that Christians try to attract young people to Jesus through approaches that may be considered to be irrelevant, uninteresting, and culturally foreign. He says, "effective cross-cultural ministry—reaching youth culture 'natives'—brings a never-changing message in an ever-

55Ron Hutchcraft, The Battle For a Generation, 41.

56Charles M. Shelton, Morality and the Adolescent: A pastoral Psychology Approach (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1991), 6. Shelton identifies three major aspects of the adolescent's experience of sin. Because the adolescent is in a time of struggle for a coherent self he or she has yet to cope with the ambiguity and complexity of emotions and experiences in an integrated way. The adolescent commonly has difficulties in experiencing self as both good and bad or in Christian terms as sinful as well as being created in the image of God. The experience of guilt or sin in the context of a felt lack of integration often finds expression in a "sense of 'totalism'" and the adolescent's deep feeling to be worthless (p. 5). Closely connected is another aspect of the adolescent's experience of sin that is rooted in the fragile nature of self-esteem. Finding difficulty in differentiating between what they do and who they are adolescents often confuse personal behavior, or in this context wrongdoings, with identity. Because of the relational qualities of sin that affect relational bonds negatively adolescents often experience sin as a sense of estrangement and as being alienated from others as well as from God. "Without a sense of bondedness," says Shelton, "the adolescent is left adrift and vulnerable to crippling introspection that can be damaging and self-defeating" (p. 6).
relevant package." The package is also a factor to support relevant communication. Finally, young people today do not only measure a message according to its content but also according to its style and look. This is a fact the church needs to be aware of. Robert Webber observes that, “the current media revolution has pointed to the need to communicate faith through more complex and variegated means. In the current media revolution, the emphasis is not only on ‘what’ is being communicated but ‘how’ it is being expressed.” However, style and look in this context should not be understood as or confused with artificial show elements and factors but rather as general indicators of quality and authenticity. In this regard, the media-based package of the Link2Life evangelism was actually helpful to create a youth oriented context for the message.

The fourth basic missional imperative, go to their world, as well as the fifth, give them love, call for an incarnational and service driven approach to evangelize young people. Although the Link2Life program was reflecting the world of young people to some extent, especially with the Link2Life soap in 2004, but also in a rudimental way with media and music, style and look—thus showing respect and appreciation for young people—the evangelistic event as such was not really entering the world of the youth. This has to happen physically and by person. However, Link2Life was not just a program followed on a screen but it was embedded in a local youth group and church context. Finally the evangelistic initiative was based on relationships young people in the church have with peers from outside the church. The pastors and youth groups were

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57 Shelton, Morality and the Adolescent, 44.

meant to connect with guest youth and to continue to build up meaningful relationships. However, because of the event character of Link2Life the relational and serving imperatives were not as loud and clear and certainly belong to the weaker points of this youth evangelistic approach.

The actual structure of the Link2Life sermons was basically oriented upon the homiletic method based on the psychology of learning (Lernpsychologisches Modell). The "Lernpsychologische Modell" is a prominent sermon model suggested in German homiletic literature. The sermon structure is based on the assumption that a sermon is basically leading the listener through a learning process and thus the sermon follows basic principles derived from the psychology of learning. Thus, the sermon structure has five phases beginning with motivation. The motivation phase of a sermon should connect with the listener and stir his or her interest for the sermon topic. Thereby the preacher is connecting the 'problem' he or she is going to address with the actual life situation of the listeners. At this stage it is also important to establish a relationship between the preacher and the listeners.

The second phase is the problem description. While the motivation phase was leading to the problem now the problem needs to be described and defined. What is the problem respective the topic all about and why is it worth talking about it? Thereby it is important that the preacher is involving himself and puts himself on the same level as his listeners. Together with the listeners the preacher is now looking for answers and a

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solution. This happens in the third phase called trial and error. Several answers and options can be presented and then discussed or illustrated. Thus, the preacher together with his listeners is working towards a plausible answer and solution.

The fourth phase then is marked by the solution offer. A solution to the problem needs to be identified and described. Examples and experiences how this solution has worked can be used to proof its relevance and plausibility and to gain acceptance from the listeners. The last phase is the reinforcement of the solution (Lösungsverstärkung). The proposed solution now needs to be applied to the life situation of the listeners. The listeners should understand how the presented solution works in his or her life.

The Link2Life sermons are basically following this scheme in their argumentation. This scheme can also be used to help young people to see that the answers our world and culture is offering to their real life issues may be inconsistent, superficial, and destructive. Especially the trial and error phase can be helpful “to press people to the logical conclusions of their basic presuppositions: to show people that their assumptions, if lived out consistently, would lead to destructive and inhumane consequences.”60 Also David Henderson says, “one of the most helpful approaches to sharing faith is to cause people to see the inadequacy of their way of life or worldview.”61 Such an argumentative approach requires of course sensitivity and respect. However, it applies especially to youth who are still in the process of finding a consistent and

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61 Henderson, Culture Shift, 64.
coherent perspective of life and thus are also ready to question adopted and assumed worldviews and sets of values.\textsuperscript{62}

However, besides the need to structure the evangelistic argumentation in a logical way and to connect to the listeners it was also very important for the Link2Life evangelism to adapt a narrative approach in order to reach young people.

Narrative Preaching—Telling God’s Story

Link2Life as a youth evangelistic initiative basically followed a narrative approach in the communication of the biblical message. The preaching was rather narrative than argumentative. Basically the sermons have been referring to an actual biblical story rather than just to single texts or passages. Further, most of the biblical stories have been chosen from the gospels and were referring to the life of Jesus and his encounters and interactions with people. Thus the actual topic of the Link2Life sermon was mostly directly connected to a biblical story and the life of Jesus.\textsuperscript{63} Since “it is the

\textsuperscript{62}For good examples of this strategy one may refer to the Link2Life 2002 sermon “No Limits – Know Limits” or the Link2Life 2004 sermon “I’m @live.” In the Appendix N the reader finds a few examples of Link2Life sermons from both Link2Life initiatives in an English translation or in the original version on the DVDs.

\textsuperscript{63}Link2Life 2002: Sermon nr. 1 “Choose or Lose” is based on the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-42). Sermon nr. 2 “Full Size Life” is based on the story of the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31). Sermon nr. 3 “Be Cool” is based on the story of Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Luke 19:1-9). Sermon nr. 4 “All You Need is Love” is not based on a single biblical story but referred to a real life experience of a young man. Sermon nr. 5 “No Limits – Know Limits” is based on the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11). Sermon nr. 6 “Dream On” is based on the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream (Dan 2).

Link2Life 2004: Sermon nr. 1 “I’m @life” is not based on a single biblical story. Sermon nr. 2 “Be a Star” is based on the story of Samuel anointing David (1 Sam. 16:1-13). Sermon nr. 3 “Backstage” is based on the story of the Human Fall (Gen 3:1-9). Sermon nr. 4 “Delete” is based on the story of Jesus’ encounter with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Sermon nr. 5 “Self Made Man” is based on Jesus encounter with the Rich Young Man (Matt 19:16-22). Sermon nr. 6 “Sex Sells” is referring to the story of the sinful woman anointing Jesus’ feet (Luke 7:36-50). Sermon nr. 7 “Enjoy It” is referring to Ecclesiastes and the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31). Sermon nr. 8 “Open End” is a topical sermon referring to several texts.
life and story of Jesus that contains the gospel;" it follows that "the story of Jesus . . . should be central in all evangelistic preaching." In a postmodern context narrative preaching has become an important holistic approach to communicate the gospel and the biblical message. "Narrative evangelism is preferred in a postmodern context," says Jimmy Long. Rather than just defending the credibility of the Christian faith a narrative approach can help to see the plausibility and authenticity of the gospel by sharing the story of Jesus in the context of the biblical metanarrative. A narrative approach supports the contextualization of the message and helps to make it more relevant. "Stories create immediate relevance with listeners" and they cross "generations and cultures with relevance." Stories also speak to the imagination of the hearer, 'create' images and involve emotion. Therefore, narrative preaching is a helpful communication methodology in a postmodern context. "The postmodern age is an image-rich age; therefore postmodern preachers should draw on image-rich narratives and stories to present the gospel and make it clear."

Narrative evangelism or preaching is by no means a new approach. Jesus himself

64 Lon Allison and Mark Anderson, Going Public With the Gospel: Reviving Evangelistic Proclamation (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 114.

65 Ibid., 115.


67 For a brief discussion of the credibility and plausibility of faith, see McLaren, The Church on the Other Side, 79-80.

68 Allison and Anderson, Going Public With the Gospel, 114.

69 Ibid., 115.

70 Craig A. Loscalzo, Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 22.
preferred story telling as the main communicative method to teach the people about the
kingdom of God. In fact, “story is the primary way in which the revelation of God is
given to us.” The reason why the story is so elementary for the communication of the
biblical message sees Peterson in the fact that life itself has a narrative shape.

Life isn’t an accumulation of abstractions such as love and truth, sin and salvation,
atonement and holiness; life is the realization of details that connect organically,
personally, specifically: names and fingerprints, street numbers and local weather,
lamb for supper and a flat tire in the rain. God reveals himself to us not in a
metaphysical formulation or cosmic fireworks display but in the kind of stories that
we use to tell our children who they are and how to grow up as human beings, tell our
friends who we are and what it’s like to be human. Story is the most adequate way
we have of accounting for our lives.

Rather than arguing about biblical truth or presenting spiritual principles and
moral guidelines narrative preaching helps to bring faith into the life reality of young
people. “Story brings us into more reality,” says Peterson, “not less, expands horizons,
sharpens both sight and insight. Story is the primary means we have for learning what
the world is, and what it means to be a human being.”

In the light of narrative psychology a narrative approach in youth evangelism can
be highly effective. The biblical metanarrative and a Christocentric understanding of the
Great Controversy can provide the existential framework in which a young person can
find true identity and orientation. The biblical story from creation, to the human fall, the
covenant and salvation to new creation can provide a coherent worldview. “Rather than
understanding the Bible in worldly terms, the Christian understands the world in biblical

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., 4.
ones; the Christian takes the biblical narrative, above all the narratives of Christ, as the fundamental story by which all others are to be understood, including his or her own story."\textsuperscript{74} The Biblical story is "a master narrative that positions all other stories"\textsuperscript{75} and it "is always provisional because not yet ended."\textsuperscript{76} In telling God's story from Scripture narrative youth evangelism is inviting the young person to become part of the ongoing history of salvation and to 'link' his or her life to the life of Christ.

**Invitation or Altar Call?**

Each Link2Life sermon ended after a short musical interplay with an invitation and a prayer offered by the speaker. Each prayer was genuine and spontaneous. There was no standardized prayer of commitment to pray with the audience as it is sometimes used in evangelistic contexts. Decision cards were available and offered every evening at the local venues as well as the option to have a personal talk with a spiritual person or the local pastor.

Inviting people to respond to the gospel message is at the very heart of evangelistic preaching. In fact, "evangelism is invitation"\textsuperscript{77} but "it should never deteriorate into coaxing, much less into threat."\textsuperscript{78} An invitation per se leaves space and freedom to the listener. An invitation is basically an offer rather than a demand and it

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\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 24.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-Currents Today," 12.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
must be in line with the theological concept of conversion as a process and as the Holy Spirit’s moving rather than with the assumption of conversion as a punctual event and as a basically human decision. An invitation is not forcing people to respond under threat of condemnation. “Evangelism is always invitation... People should turn to God because they are drawn by God’s love, not because they are pushed to God for fear.”

However, appeals and altar calls have become a prominent practice in evangelistic ‘campaigns’ of the Seventh-day Adventist church as well. Heating up the emotions at the end of the sermon to cause a reaction of the listener or to step forward is a method that appeared during the first revival movements in North America in the eighteenth century but was not systematized until the early nineteenth century. The altar call, calling people to step out of the pew and come forward to accept Christ or—as it was originally done—to sit on the ‘mourner’s bench’, has been especially popularized by Charles Finney. What helped this method to become popular was the pragmatic justification that it produces results that can be measured. Although Jesus did challenge his listeners and call individuals into discipleship there is according to Bennett “no clear teaching in the Bible to support the use of this method of evangelism” which often confuses “the

79 Bosch, Transforming Mission, 413.
81 Ibid., 112-113, 247.
82 Ibid., 187.
83 Ibid., 248.
outward act of responding by moving forward or raising a hand with the inward act of conversion."\textsuperscript{84}

There is certainly a place for this kind of practice as long as it is not used in a manipulative or fear driven way but rather with respect and in a theologically reflected way. A genuine encounter with Jesus is not something that can be produced or forced and "altar call is to narrow a focus for commitment responses."\textsuperscript{85}

Although it would have produced an awkward situation anyway to have an altar call at the end of the sermon and expecting young people to raise their hands or to step forward in order to stand in front of a screen such an evangelistic method was deliberately not used in the conviction that the elementary form of evangelistic communication is to implore or beseech people (2 Cor 5:20) rather than to push or force them. Finally, inviting is more natural to the Gospel message than demanding. This corresponds with narrative evangelism. Narrative preaching is basically of invitational nature. The biblical story does not impose Christ on the life of the listener but rather invites the listener into the life with Christ. "Story is the gospel way. Story isn’t imposed on our lives; it invites us into its life."\textsuperscript{86}

**Authentic Preaching**

Youth evangelism needs a high degree of authenticity. Since Link2Life was basically a broadcasted evangelistic event the authenticity of the preaching and the

\textsuperscript{84}Bennett, *The Altar Call*, 248.


\textsuperscript{86}Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall*, 4.
preacher was a crucial factor. Since the personality of the evangelist is inseparably connected to the message preached it was important to establish a relationship of trust. Generally authenticity is established when the listener can see a true correspondence between the message and the messenger. "Authentic preachers do not represent themselves as removed, perfect, or on a pedestal, but through various forms of self-disclosure and identification, attempt to communicate a genuine desire for self-awareness and self-knowledge...The authentic preacher is neither false to self nor imitative of others." The whole personality needs to be involved. Thus, authentic preaching can also be seen as an "incarnational approach to preaching."88

In order to establish authenticity it was part of the evangelistic communication methodology to involve "I" stories in the preaching and to share episodes and experiences of the speaker’s life. By doing this the youth could not only connect to the preacher and get to know him but it also helped the young person to better answer the question whether the message preached is also real to the preacher.

However, in order to support the authenticity of the evangelistic message it was also important not to generate a typical ‘preaching situation.’ The Link2Life speaker did not appear as ‘the evangelist’ neither in the style of communication nor in his look. Allison and Anderson see this as an important aspect of the evangelistic communication in today’s world by saying: “Authenticity is the most compelling communication trait in today’s world. . . . Evangelists and pastors seeking to preach to pre-Christian people have


to get rid of any notions of ‘the preacher.’”89 In the Link2Life setting there was therefore no special place designated for the preaching or separated on stage. There was no pulpit. It was important not just to have a ‘talking head’ on screen or static preaching. There was rather movement and the preaching happened in the specific setting of the scenery; it could be on a couch, at the Link2Life bar, sitting at a table with others, going to the computer desk for interaction with a presenter, etc. The speaker was also dressed in every day knockabout clothes. All of this should foster authenticity and underline the fact that talking about God, the Bible, and Christian faith does not require a specific church setting but rather is part of the common life of people.

Although Link2Life was a technology driven evangelistic event and in essence a broadcasted program it was possible to establish authenticity and credibility. Technology and media do not per se contradict the concept of authenticity since young people today are not media and technology illiterates and in general are able to differentiate the artificial from the real and the show from the genuine. Technology and media as typical characteristics of today’s popular culture are so much part of the young people’s world and their communication that engaging them in evangelism can also be helpful approach for the communication of the Gospel.

Engaging Technology, Media, and the Arts

Scholars describe the phenomenon of our Western popular culture in which young people are socialized as a consequence of “a mass audience created by urbanization and

democratization along with technologies of mass distribution."\(^{90}\) The common commercial and entertaining insignia of the popular culture are in fact mass products like TV, movies, technology, music, etc. However, media and popular arts do not only reflect or represent our culture but in as much they help to create it.\(^{91}\) Technology, media, and popular arts have even become common means of communication. In fact, popular culture today "serves as the lingua franca of the postmodern world."\(^{92}\) It is spoken and understood by the common Western population and people. This is especially true for young people in and outside the realm of the church. The consummation of media and technology as well as engaging them as means of communication is not only part of the life reality of non-Christian youth. Research in the United States reveals that Christians "have bought into media technology as much as anyone . . . there is no significant statistical difference between Christians and other groups."\(^{93}\) Therefore, the contextualizing of the Christian message for young people in our culture also means to be able to speak in the language of popular culture as today’s *lingua franca*.

While in the modern paradigm Christian evangelism has been particularly cognitive a new paradigm has risen that challenges a strictly verbal communication of the message. "The birth of television has restored imagery, and the arts and the arrival of the internet have moved society to a more interactive approach to communication. The rise


\(^{93}\) Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open*, 12.
of the visual, symbolic, and interactive nature of communications affects the new approach to evangelism and discipleship.94 Engaging technology, media, and the arts in evangelistic communication is not to be seen as optional. Popular culture is also not to be seen per se as an enemy to the Gospel. Nevertheless, there is still a wide spread Christian reluctance to accept popular culture as a means of evangelistic communication. Popular culture is too common and worldly whereas a more academic culture is often seen as more appropriate in a Christian context. Evangelistic approaches that involve what can be viewed as high culture are preferred. However, common people live in a popular culture, we all do, and Jesus was living among the common people. He was speaking a common language and often referred to the common life of the people. Jesus was fully in touch with the culture of the people of his time. In a similar way effective evangelism today needs to be in touch with and speak in the language of the culture of the people. “If the Christian world continues in its scholastic mode, viewing popular culture as degraded and superficial, then the gap between church and culture will continue to widen,”95 admonish Detweiler and Taylor.

Engaging technology and popular culture is therefore more and more an evangelistic mandate especially in the context of youth evangelism. Alvin Reid observes, “our failure to reach youth is symptomatic of a larger failure in evangelism. We must see technology as our friend in evangelism. . . . We must use the media and the arts in biblical ways to declare Christ to this generation.”96 Some argue that there is already a

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94 Webber, Ancient-Future Evangelism, 132-133.
95 Detweiler and Taylor, A Matrix of Meanings, 23.
96 Reid, Introduction to Evangelism, 260.
lot of catching up to do for the Christian churches. “It is no secret,” says John Pewell, “that the mainline church seriously lags behind the rest of the world in using technology for the missional imperative of Christian faith.”

However, engaging the arts in worship and the communication of the gospel message has a long tradition in the history of the Christian church. Since popular culture in general as well as the mass media has increased the interest of the people in the arts, the arts have also become more influential in the context of Christian spirituality. It has been scientifically observed that a greater use of the arts “becomes a path to personal growth” and that “for many churches, it has also been a dynamic source of new vitality.” Thus, Wuthnow pragmatically suggests that “the present interest in the arts can be viewed as a resource simply waiting for the churches to take advantage of it.” Among such advantages is the fact that “motion pictures, television programs, popular music, and literature provide a common culture to which pastors can refer for sermon illustrations.”

Although many things in the popular culture are rather shallow and trivial Romanowski is certainly right to say, “the popular arts do have the capacity to provoke serious reflection on our lives and our society. Popular music, movies, and television programs often address important issues and communal concerns, offering accessible

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99 Ibid., 236.
100 Ibid., 237.
artistic interpretations of our lives and times."\textsuperscript{101} Making use of popular culture in evangelism is according to Dennis Haack similar to the method used by Paul in Athens:

Story, song, and image can be used as points of contact to explore the big issues of life without compromising the integrity of the gospel. Popular culture . . . can become the beginning point for exploring the claims of Christ, and thus serve as the postmodern equivalent of the Athenian altar to an unknown god. Modernity required an apologetic that was essentially rational; a postmodern apologetic needs to be essentially rooted in glory, with a greater emphasis on art, narrative, and image (without for a moment being anything less than rational).\textsuperscript{102}

Of course, contextualizing the communication of the gospel with popular arts involves a critical and biblically reflected approach and appraisal. “The challenge,” so Romanowski, “is to discover what it means for Christians to be faithful to God and responsible to their neighbor through the popular arts.”\textsuperscript{103} Facing this challenge the Link2Life evangelism was trying to refer to the cultural reality of young people in a twofold way: “To join the practices of an electronic culture, on the one hand, and to keep faith with the story of Christ, on the other.”\textsuperscript{104}

Movies and Images

Images and movies were often used as references and popular metaphors during the Link2Life evangelism. Jesus often communicated the message of the new Kingdom in parables, object lessons, and every day life stories. Many of the elements and motives in the stories and parables Jesus used resonated with the collective memory and

\textsuperscript{101}Romanowski, \textit{Eyes Wide Open}, 16.


\textsuperscript{103}Romanowski, \textit{Eyes Wide Open}, 20.

\textsuperscript{104}Sample, \textit{The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World}, 122.
experience of his contemporaries. Television, cinema, computer, and other visual contexts belong to the collective experiences of young people. This is of course an ambivalent experience. But in our culture the use of images is pervasive and interrelated with the world of young people and it would be rather strange for a technology and broadcast based approach of youth evangelism not to engage and connect with this world.

The first message of Link2Life 2002 “Choose or Lose” (L2L 02/1) actually opened with the ambiguity of the youth’ experiences with media, specifically with the TV, by referring to the zapping from one TV channel to the next. The zapping experience on one hand was used to invite the youth to critically reflect a ‘zapping attitude’ in life and to invite them to be involved with the Link2Life experience and to be committed to be part of all the Link2Life events. On the other hand the zapping experience was analyzed and connected to the biblical story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) – a woman not satisfied with life, zapping from one man to another in her deep rooted longing for true love and acceptance; a woman thirsty for true life and relationship. In a similar way, people are zapping from one well to another hoping to find something that finally quenches their thirst for true life. But here is Jesus saying that he is the well and that he will give us the water that will quench our thirst and satisfy our longing – no more zapping needed.

Besides indigenous video and clip productions to support the messages of Link2Life there have also been references to popular movies. “We can see in movies powerful moments that lead to religious insight or portray religious truth or move us to a
religious response.” Accordingly, using movie clips and references to cinema blockbusters in youth evangelism can be effective tools to connect to the young people as well as to the biblical message preached. Of course, as Spencer and Spencer say “movies are neither authoritative nor comprehensive.”

But based on the assumption that any medium is an “extension of ourselves” media, and especially movies, are basically mirroring ourselves, our human condition, our dreams and yearnings, our perceptions of life, as well as our alienation from God. In this respect, as Brian Stone says, “the cinema is regularly and quite amazingly a source of revelation about ourselves and our world.”

Basically, movies and specific scenes can become deep meaning when they are thoughtfully examined with the leading question, where and how does God fit into the picture. Spencer and Spence are convinced that “as long as movies tell stories about people, they also tell about God.” It is therefore certainly true that “in theory, any movie could be used to launch discussions about meaning and value.”

The computer animated movie “Shrek” for instance served as references in the “All You Need is Love” message (L2L 02/4). The movie “The Trueman Show” served as a popular metaphor in the message “Dream On” (L2L 02/6) for the fact that there is more

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106 Ibid., 143.


109 Spencer and Spencer, *God Through the Looking Glass*, 143.

to life than just our own ‘little’ world we are living in. During the “Backstage” message (L2L 04/3) the trilogy “Lord of the Rings” served as a popular metaphor for the Great Controversy between Light and Darkness. Or the message “Delete” (L2L 04/4) referred to the movie “Phone Booth” where the main character finds himself trapped in a phone booth, pinned down by an extortionist’s sniper rifle, forcing him to confess in public that he betrayed his wife and that he is not the person he pretends to be.

The Link2Life messages made various references to popular culture and famous people known by the youth. In a more thorough way the “Be Cool” message (Link2Life 02/3) portrayed briefly the British singer and pop star Robbie Williams who admits to have a weak personality and that a deep longing for attention and recognition finally drives his pretended coolness and his show. Or the ‘white trash’ rapper Marshall Mathers alias Eminem serves in the message “Backstage” (L2L 04/3) with his alter ego ‘Slim Shady’ illustrates the human dilemma of wanting the good bud doing the bad. For the “Sex Sells” message a reference is made to the ‘Nipplegate’ of the Super Bowl in 2004 that became more popular in the internet than in 2001 the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York.

Images and metaphors supported the preaching and helped to visualize important aspects of a message. For example, during the message “No Limits? – Know Limits!” (L2L 02/5) there were barriers on the stage that the speaker destroyed one by one while he was relating the developing story of David committing adultery with Bathsheba and destroying her husband’s life (2 Sam 11). During the “Dream On” message there was a physical statute from Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Dan 2. The “I’m @live” (L2L 04/1) message played with a picture that immediately changed its meaning depending on the
information given to the viewers in order to illustrate how our interpretation of life changes depending on our believe in a creator or in coincidence. While referring to the human dilemma of sin, wanting the good but doing the bad (Rom 7) in the message “Backstage” (L2L 04/3) the speaker held a bust (an artificial head) next to his own showing that one head is doing something else than the other. While speaking about the rich young man coming to Jesus (Matt 19:16ff) in the “Self Made Man” message the speaker was hammering on a high striker or ring-the-bell machine to show, that any attempt to reach heaven by his own good deeds will ultimately fail (the iron always comes down even if it rings the bell). The “Sex Sells” message (L2L 04/6) opened with a big piece of meat to look at thus referring to the human meat marked and lustful staring at human bodies.

Creativity is an absolute necessity for youth evangelism and communicating the gospel to young people in our image based and visualized culture needs to engage the imagination through movies, images, metaphors, and symbols. “Engaging the iconic character of images, especially in our time, can be an enormously imaginative and creative activity”¹¹¹ says Sample. Creativity says Christine Wood should be a basic ingredient in all evangelism. “Creative evangelism is the God-given ability to bring about something new, something that has never been before, something that provides unbelievers with the Aha! experience of realizing truth about God they didn’t know before.”¹¹²


Computer and Internet

The use of the Internet was a very important aspect of the Link2Life youth evangelism as well. It served not only as a medium to promote the evangelism and to provide necessary information about it. It was also an important means to foster the community feeling among the various local Link2Life venues in Germany and Switzerland. It was thus also an integral part of the main program. The Computer Desk was a program part where all the youth could see what is happening in other local venues. The presenters were showing pictures that were sent to the Link2Life management, shared reports and special experiences and also introduced new features on the website. The computer desk was the specific community part of the Link2Life program. It also gave the opportunity to interact with the local venues for instance by an Internet voting. During the “Be Cool” program (L2L 02/3) the coolest picture among all those that have been sent in was voted online. Also for the Link2Life context it proved to be true that “the Internet has potential for bringing a sense of community to people who may be distant from a physical worshiping community.”

Besides the many possible interactions and the community pages with reports and a collection of pictures from all the local venues on the website the Link2Life live chat rooms provided a powerful tool to foster online communication between youth from the local groups and key figures of the Link2Life evangelism like the presenters, the musicians, special guests, and the speaker. Always a few minutes after the Link2Life program was over the chat rooms opened for at least half an hour and since there were computers at each local venue the youth could right away get in touch with the people

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113 Jewell, Wired for Ministry, 17.
they just saw on a screen. Thus, also the Link2Life team had an immediate response from the young people. “Technology is here to stay,” says Peggy Kendall, “using technology as a way to communicate with one another will certainly become more and more a part of everyday life.”

Music

Among the youth leaders from Germany and Switzerland it was agreed that the music played during the Link2Live events should be oriented on the preferences of youth and reflect their life reality but at the same time also support the evangelistic message. This proved to be a balancing act.

During the Link2Life 2002 evangelism the concept was to invite contemporary Christian music bands. Some of which were artists or bands known to a broader Christian audience others were not. Each evening another band or musical ensemble was engaged to mold the music program. The music program was basically split into two parts. Twenty minutes before to the actual beginning of the Link2Life program the bands performed a mini-concert that was broadcast to all the local venues. The local organizer had the opportunity to either show the mini-concert in their settings, for instance to create some background atmosphere while the young people and visitors came in, were chatting, and noshing something, surfing on the Link2Life website at the computer corner etc., or they could just omit the mini-concert and then connect at the time the official program was about to start. There was always about a one-minute break between the mini concert and the program start. The same band that was playing the mini-concert was also playing

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114Peggy Kendall, Rewired: Youth Ministry in an Age of IM and MySpace (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 113.
songs during the main program. There was a variety of music styles, although, besides a rather jazzy band during the first Link2Life evening in 2002, they all could be labeled as Christian pop music.\textsuperscript{115}

The concept of inviting different Christian bands and artists was generally appreciated. However, it also dependent on the artists or bands not only to perform their music but also to be sensitive to the evangelistic context they serve. After the first Link2Life experience in 2002 the assembly of the German youth leaders agreed that in 2004 there should be just one Link2Life band performing all music. This was to ensure that the music played is not only in harmony with the evangelistic context but also that the music and songs not only create atmosphere and provide musical elements in the program but that the music and songs directly support the message of the evening. In the planning of the Link2Life 2004 initiative the musical director met several times with the speaker to discuss and select the songs for each L2L evening.

Although, the music is a hot potato in the Seventh-day Adventist church the Link2Life team was convinced that in general the music has to be oriented on the young people rather than on the sensitivity of church members. Nevertheless, the music played in 2004 was in general more moderate than during the 2002 evangelism.

Since it is true that “music pervades our culture”\textsuperscript{116} and is omnipresent in the world of young people it is certainly an element not to neglect in the context of youth


evangelism. In the light of the fact that there has hardly ever been any evangelistic initiative without forms of music the music has an even more important role to play in youth evangelism. It does not only create atmosphere and connect with the world of the young people and the emotions but it also transports the Christian message. Therefore, “in an evangelistic service the right music is vital” and that the music played “can almost make or break the effectiveness of the service” or the evangelism.\(^{117}\)

Also the Link2Life evangelism had to deal with this area of tension. But, the experience is that in the context of the church no matter what music played there were always people, also young people, who did not like it. For some the music was too modern and ‘worldly’ for others too moderate and ‘conservative.’ Nevertheless, Drummond is right to say that “the time is overdue for music based on the language of an urbanized, postmodern society rather than that of rural nostalgia. . . . Music that communicates the true message of Christ in the words and phrases that are meaningful to current mentality and thought structure is vital if we aspire to reach people.”\(^{118}\) For unchurched young people in our popular culture it is true that in general if a Christian event “does not sound right, it will not be true, it will not be genuine, and it will not be real.”\(^{119}\)

**Link2Life Talk: Authentic Life Images**

To support the general Christian message and appeal it was a regular part of the Link2Life program to have a Link2Life talk were the presenters and from time to time

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\(^{117}\)Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next*, 95.

\(^{118}\)Ibid.

\(^{119}\)Sample, *Powerful Persuasion*, 81-82.
also the Link2Life speaker had a personal discussion with special guests. Sometimes such guests were specially invited individuals for the talk and sometimes such guests were also artists or musicians who were part of the program anyway. The Link2Life talk should present ‘real life’ Christians with whom young people can identify and with whom it was possible to speak about the main topic of the actual Link2Life program. Among the special guest there were also some celebrities like a former Mister Switzerland, Claudio Minder, a young Christian who won the Swiss beauty contest in the year 2000. He was part of the “Full Size Life” program (L2L 02/2). Or for the “Be a Star” message (L2L 04/2), Nektarios, a finalist of the German reality talent show “Deutschland sucht den Superstar”\textsuperscript{120} and a professed Christian was invited and interviewed.

Link2Life Soap

Another carrying element of the Link2Life program during the 2004 initiative was the Link2Life soap opera or sitcom. The sitcom was played life on stage and in the specific setting that pretended to be an Internet Café. The sitcom portrayed a clique of four young people who regularly meet in the Internet Café, two young men and two young women. Part of the sitcom was also a young woman who served as the bartender.

The sitcom gave opportunity to reflect typical attitudes of life of young people, their relationships, hopes, dreams, challenges, and struggles. The challenge of the sitcom was to connect the series to each of the main topics of the message while at the same time also have a coherent story line so that it also worked as a serial story. Christoph Silber

\textsuperscript{120}This is a German version of the British “Pop Idol” or “American Idol” music competition.
who is a German Adventist and professional scriptwriter has produced the script for the Link2Life soap.

Since the main Link2Life venue was located at the Marienhohe in Darmstadt, where the Adventist church has a big secondary school and the biggest church building, the actors for the play have been casted among the pupils who were part of the regular theatre class at the secondary school. The regular teacher of the theatre class directed the group and they could rehearse right on spot.

The Link2Life soap became a popular part of the Link2Life initiatives since youth could identify with the individual characters and since the story supported very well the evangelistic message.

Format of the Link2Life Program

Technically speaking a youth Net evangelism means to create a specific broadcasting format that encompasses various elements. To create a broadcasting format basically means to establish an overall concept that helps to structure the program and to mark a high level of recognition and memorability. The format itself can help to foster identification since the regular visitor and viewer gets familiar with the elements and the program structure. Once the format is established the general structure of the program remains unchanged during all the broadcasted events.

Although many of the elements of the Link2Life formats have been neither new nor uncommon they all played an important supportive role in connecting with the youth, creating a sense of community, and finally in the communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the biblical message.
The Format of Link2Life 2002

The Link2Life format basically had an interlude with a mini-concert, the main program, and an afterglow with the chat room discussions. This has been the basic program structure:

1. Welcome and Introduction of Music Band . 2 Minutes
2. Mini-Concert . 17 Minutes
3. Black Screen (broadcasting a freeze image) . 30 Seconds
4. Link2Life Opener and Jingle . 1 Minute
5. Main Welcome and Introduction . 3 Minutes
6. Music . 5 Minutes
7. Link2Life Talk . 5 Minutes
8. Computer Desk / Link2Life Community . 7 Minutes
9. Music . 5 Minutes
10. Evangelistic Message . 25 Minutes
11. Invitation and Prayer . 1 Minute
12. Music . 5 Minutes
13. Closing and Announcements . 3 Minutes
14. Screen Credits . 1 Minute
15. Afterglow in Chat Room . 30 Minutes

The Format of Link2Life 2004

The format of the Link2Life 2004 evangelism slightly changed. Remarkable is that the mini-concert was abandoned but that a new element was introduced with the live sitcom or Link2Life soap. This has been the basic program structure in 2004:
Summary

The Link2Life youth evangelism was the first actual Youth NET initiative produced and a broadcasted by the Seventh-day Adventist church in Europe. Since it was a satellite evangelism Link2Life has been received at many local venues and thus reached youth all over Germany and Switzerland. The evangelism engaged local youth groups to organize their own specific local Link2Life event. Because the Link2Life 2002 evangelism was considered to be successful by the church administration a second
initiative was voted and issued even before the first evangelism finished. In the year 2004 Link2Life youth evangelism was produced for a second time by the Youth Departments of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Germany and Switzerland.

The Link2Life evangelism was more than a broadcasted sermon series. It rather constituted a new form of an evangelistic event and a community among the many local groups that participated. As such it was an evangelistic attempt to contextualize the gospel and the biblical message and to connect with the life experience and attitude of youth in a postmodern society and popular culture. Despite a strong media based approach and a variety of creative program elements in reference to popular culture and framed with moderate Contemporary Christian music the preaching was at the very heart and center of the Link2Life evangelism. The preaching followed basically a narrative method where the lines of argument were structured according to a model suggested by the psychology of learning (Lernpsychologisches Modell). Through the communicative methods used it was important also to create a high level of authenticity and to invite young people to link their lives to the Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF “LINK2LIFE”

The evaluation of a program or a specific activity is a necessary process to reflect on the effectiveness and the impact of an endeavor as well as on its viability and repeatability. Although, this applies to an evangelistic endeavor as well it is in such a context not always easy to measure success and failure or end up with a clear-cut result. Evangelism has a spiritual context and aims at people and not just at changing a specific behavior or at improving knowledge or competence. Evangelism also involves more than just the human activity. Speaking about God to other people makes God not only an object of evangelism but also a subject of evangelism. God himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, is actively involved in touching the people’s hearts and in changing perspectives and attitudes. Although there are certainly indications of God’s moving in the lives of people there is no objective measurement for that. It is possible that the individual spiritual experience during an evangelistic campaign does not have an immediate impact in the life of a person but in the long term it may turn out to have been a noteworthy aspect of an individual’s spiritual growth and faith journey. On the other hand, immediate reactions and responses of people during an evangelistic campaign may not always be genuine expressions of a deep spiritual growth but rather of a mere emotional experience.
Nevertheless, despite such objections a summative evaluation of the outcome of an evangelistic program can be helpful in interpreting its effectiveness and its impact. In order to gain a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the accomplishments it is helpful to combine both quantitative and qualitative measurements. Figures speak a certain language but feedback and opinions of people reflecting on their actual experience speak another. While figures can give important information about the number of people involved in the programs, the actual guests that attended, how many people received Bible studies or got baptized, the feedback of the people can highlight what made the biggest impact on them, which of the program elements they specifically liked or disliked, what attracted them or what and how something has changed.

Evaluation Process

Although already several years have passed since the actual Link2Life youth evangelism in the year 2002 and 2004 there is ample quantitative and qualitative data. The data examined comes from two main sources. The first source is quantitative data that was collected at the end of both, Link2Life 2002 and 2004 by a questionnaire sent to all the local venue leaders.¹ The second rather qualitative data is based on a total of 751 responses that were sent as emails in written form to the Link2Life management.²

The Quantitative Data

The key figures for the quantitative data collection were from the local venue leaders. These were often the local youth leaders, youth pastors or senior pastors of the


²See Volume 2, Appendix O. All L2L 2002 and 2004 responses sent by e-mail are listed.
respective Adventist congregation. In 2002 there was a total of 185 venues that participated in the Link2Life evangelism and in 2004 there were 175 local venues. The local venue leaders were responsible each time to count the people present as well as to identify the actual number of guests or visitors and then to report these figures via email as soon as the program has ended. In 2002 an average number of exactly 100 venues reported their figures after each evening. This is a response rate of 54%. In 2004 the average number of venues reporting their figures each time was 112, which is a response rate of 64%.

Often the leaders also included a brief report about their experience and how the evangelistic program has been received and accepted by the young people at their place or they asked questions (often of technical nature) or made suggestions for the next programs. During all the Link2Life events there were feedback cards available at the local venues so that the youth could give an immediate response after a program ended. The local venue leaders collected these cards and often based their reports also on the feedback they received from these cards. Thus, there were actual figures available after each Link2Life weekend as well as an immediate response from the youth at the local venues. Together with all the individual responses that came in by email this feedback helped build the qualitative data.

Another important source for the quantitative evaluation process of Link2Life 2002 and 2004 was a questionnaire that was sent to all local venue leaders after the event was over. The leaders have been asked to fill in the questionnaire according to their experiences and based on the feedback they received from the youth that attended the evangelism at their place. Whereas the 2002 questionnaire basically involved twelve
questions or sets of questions the 2004 questionnaire was more extensive and asked a total of thirty-four questions grouped in three sections (before Link2Life, during Link2Life, after Link2Life). Although the 2004 questionnaire has been more detailed the basic questions in both 2002 and 2004 questionnaires dealt with the following areas:

- Advertising and information about Link2Life
- The general perception of the evangelistic program as well as its various elements, especially the preaching
- The organizer's expectation regarding the number of visitors and actual guests
- The effects of Link2Life on the youth, youth group, and the church
- The evangelistic impact of Link2Life (baptisms, bible studies with youth, new contacts to youth, youth coming to church and to the local youth events, etc.)
- The future of this kind of evangelism (should there be another Link2Life) In the spring of the year 2003 and 2005 the questionnaires were sent to all the leaders of the local venues and they were asked to send their responses back before the beginning of the summer so that the deadline was about half a year after the respective Link2Life evangelism ended. In 2003 a total number of 56 venues sent their questionnaires back, which is a response rate of 30.3% for the Link2Life 2002 evangelism. In 2005 a total of 59 venues sent back the Link2Life 2004 questionnaire which represents a response rate of 33.7%. However, in both cases the response rates indicate that the data provided by the questionnaires can be viewed as statistically representative and reliable.3

The Qualitative Data

The qualitative data for the evaluation of Link2Life is based on 751 email feedback that were sent to the Link2Life management. For the Link2Life 2002 evangelism 276 email feedback were evaluated and for Link2Life 2004 the evaluation was based on 475 email feedback. The two collections of feedback consist of emails that on one hand came from the local venue leaders or representatives reporting their experiences after each Link2Life evening or weekend and on the other hand from individuals who sent in their personal feedback and reactions.

For the evaluation of the feedback content analysis was used. The most common practice of a content analysis is doing a word-frequency count. The idea is that the words used most often show the greatest concerns. However, there are some limitations. Because of stylistic reasons an author of a text may not always use the same word to express his opinions but use synonyms. The same is true if there are several texts from different authors. They do not all use the same word to designate the same thing. It is therefore important to identify those synonym words that are used to express the same issue and do the count by including all of them. Another limitation of a mere word-frequency count is that a word may be used in different contexts. Although the same term is used it may in one passage be used in a negative and in another passage in a positive context. Therefore, not only the word itself is of importance but also its appraisal and context. The word ‘good’ for instance has another meaning when it is negatively expressed like ‘not good’ or when it is in a specific positive context like ‘very good.’ Further, the qualitative word-frequency count also requires identifying specific key terms. Regarding the Link2Life feedback key terms are especially those words that
refer to program elements like 'music' or 'message' or words that express someone's appraisal in a positive or negative way. Therefore, the content analysis of the Link2Life feedback was not only made by simply counting the occurrences of terms but by identifying synonyms and key terms, by examining the frequency of these words, and by evaluating the actual context of the terms.

The Results of Link2Life 2002 & 2004

The results of the Link2Life evangelism can be measured according to numeric terms as well as according to qualitative terms. While the first will rather document the hard facts the latter rather asks for changes and processes that Link2Life provoked in people. The quantitative and the qualitative data shed light on both aspects.

The Local Venues

After it had been decided to plan and organize the first Youth Net evangelism in the German speaking Europe the denominational youth leaders were anxious for the response of the churches and youth groups in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. The Austrian leadership, however, decided already in spring 2001 not to participate in this youth evangelistic endeavor. Therefore, Link2Life was officially not taking place in the Austrian Union. Unofficially a few Austrian groups of youth participated anyway.4 Nevertheless, the church leadership in Germany and Switzerland was very pleased about the positive response in their fields and to see a final number of 185 churches respectively youth groups participate in the first Link2Life evangelism in 2002. The venues were evenly spread among the Unions. There were 84 venues in the North

4They have not been in the list of registered local venues and are not included in the statistics.
German Union which represents 45.4% of the total local venues that registered and 87 venues from the South German Union participated which are 47% of the registered venues. Another 14 venues or 7.6% were situated in the Swiss German Conference. Especially for the German leaders it was pleasing to note that the Link2Life evangelism was equally well received in both of the German Unions. Table 1 lists the number of venues in the respective Unions.5

Table 1. L2L 2002: Conferences and local venues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conferences</th>
<th>Venues 2002</th>
<th>Venues 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North German Union</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin-Brandenburg</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central German</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Saxonian-Bremen</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Rhenish-Westfalia</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South German Union</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Wuerttemberg</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Rhenish</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Bavaria</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bavaria</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Swiss Union</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss German</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>185</strong></td>
<td><strong>175</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5See Volume 2, Appendix Q for a detailed list of the officially registered venues respectively youth groups for the Link2Life 2002 and 2004 evangelism.
In 2004 the number of officially registered venues dropped slightly to 175 places. During and after the Link2Life evangelism in 2002 there were some voices especially in Germany that questioned this kind of evangelistic approach to reach young people. The music in particular was at the center of the critique. Because of this it was expected that in 2004 there might be less venues. When finally almost the same number of local groups or churches registered for the second Link2Life evangelism in 2004 it was seen as an affirmation and encouragement for the responsible youth leaders in Germany and Switzerland. However, eventually the number of venues only dropped in the South German Union from 87 in 2002 to 75 in 2004.\(^6\) The North German Union had 85 and the Swiss German Conference 15 venues. Thus, both had one more than in 2002. In percentages, the North German Union represented 48.6%, the South German Union 42.8%, and the Swiss German Conference 8.6% of all the local venues.

That the drop of the total number of venues from 2002 to 2004 happened in the South German Union and especially in the Baden-Württemberg Conference might support the notion that the south of Germany has a more conservative church profile. However, also the Niedersachsen-Bremen Conference in the North-German Union had a rather significant drop of venues. In this light it would be rather artificial to explain the drop by referring to a rather stereotype attribution of the liberal north and the conservative south. However, in general the drop might reflect the fact that Link2Life

\(^6\)In fact, the Baden-Württemberg Conference dropped from 42 in 2002 to 31 in 2004, the Südbayern (South Bavaria) Conference from 17 to 13, and the Nordbayern (North Bavaria) Conference had one venue less then in 2002 (today the two Bavarian Conferences are united to one single Conference) but Mittelrhein increased from 16 to 20. In the North German Union also the Niedersachsen-Bremen Conference had a decrease and dropped from 19 in 2002 to 11 in 2004 but on the other hand Nordrheinwestfalen increased from 14 to 21 and Mitteldeutschland from 26 to 32 venues.
2002 was for some Adventist churches and youth too “progressive.” However, the increase in some of the Conferences also suggests that in these regions Link2Life 2002 has been well received and was considered to be a successful approach of youth evangelism.

Participants and Guests

One of the great advantages of satellite broadcasted evangelism is the fact that an evangelist or an evangelistic program is in general able to reach much more people as a campaign in a local context. Although the term mass evangelism has an ambiguous as well as an ambivalent connotation it is an appropriate designation for the Link2Life youth evangelism justified by the mere number of youth participants.

Participants and Guests in 2002

Europe and especially the German speaking fields have in general quite small churches. The number of participants of the Link2Life youth evangelism has therefore to be seen in the light of the fact that in Germany the average Adventist church has about 62 members with usually only a few youth. Low figures for evangelistic campaigns in local church contexts are the daily bread of the mission activities in these fields. In this respect the average number of 5687 participants for the six evangelistic events is a quite impressive figure. This means an average group of 32 youth to meet each time at each of the local venues.

As displayed in figure 1 the total number of participants in 2002 constantly increased from the first to the fourth Link2Life event but decreased again on the last of

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the three weekends until it reached more or less the initial number from the first event. The drop of participants can be hazardous but the fact that the last weekend was in December and thus in the Christmas season could have had an effect. It seems rather unlikely that less youth attended the last Link2Life evening event because of topical reasons. Generally all the messages have been highly appreciated. However, it might not be by chance that the peak of participants was with the fourth Link2Life evening which dealt with the topic of ‘love.’ Nevertheless, only the first and the last evenings had been below the average number of participants but still represent a rather high figure.

Figure 1. Total number of participants and guests of Link2Life 2002.

Figure 1 also displays the number of guests for each of the six evenings during Link2Life 2002, which here are extracted from the total number of participants. The category ‘guests’ refers to young people who did not have an Adventist background and who were not regularly attending the youth club meetings or the church. Local leaders
were asked not to count as guests non-baptized youth with an Adventist background who show up in the church or in the youth club meetings. In most cases the category ‘guests’ refers to non-Adventist friends of Adventist youth since 68.2% of all the guests came to the Link2Life 2002 evangelism by invitation through a friend.

The guest figures show that the number of guests was rather stable throughout all the weekends. In fact as the total number of participant increased from the first to the fourth Link2Life evening so did the number of guests. As there were more Adventist youth there were also more guests. This correlation between guests and Adventist youth highlights the fact that most of the youth with non-Adventist background attended the evangelism because of relational reasons. The average number of actual guests is 954 people, which is an average of 16.7% of all the participants. This means that every sixth participant during the Link2Life 2002 evangelism was a youth with a non-Adventist background.

However, despite the rather stable percentage of guests it still seems remarkable that the highest percentage of guests, namely 17.8%, was reached with the fourth evening that dealt with the topic of ‘love.’ This seems especially remarkable since a similar observation can be made in 2004 with the topic ‘sex sells,’ as we will see. Although the attendance of the youth seemed not to be significantly dependent on the actual topic but rather on the general event character and the general appreciation of the program and preaching of Link2Life in 2002 as well as in 2004 it is still possible to say that speaking about love and sex attracts most of the young people.
Participants and Guests in 2004

The fact that there was a slight decrease of local venues from 2002 to 2004 did also affect the total number of participants. In 2004 the average number of participants for the eight evangelistic events is 4321 persons per evening. This figure represents an average group of about 25 youth per local venue, which is in the central European context still a remarkable group of young people in a local Adventist church context.

![Bar chart showing participants and guests of link2life 2004](image)

Figure 2. Total number of participants and guests of link2life 2004.

By looking at the pattern of the figures (figure 2) a similar observation as in 2002 can be made. In 2002 the bar chart describes an arc with a peak at the fourth evening. In 2004 there is again a general increase of the numbers from first weekend to the weekend next to the last. Since in 2004 there were four weekends instead of three as in 2002 the peak with a total of 4827 participants is reached at the sixth evening. Similar to 2002 the total numbers dropped again slightly at the last weekend. Again, this weekend was in
December and thus in the Christmas season. However, in contrast to 2002 the number of the last evening did not drop down to the figure of the first evening.

Despite the similarities the Link2Life evangelism 2004 reveals an interesting pattern that was rather hidden in the 2002 figures. The uneven Link2Life evenings (first, third, etc.) in 2002 as well as in 2004 were on a Friday night. The even Link2Life evenings (second, fourth, etc.) were on Saturday night. The figures in 2004 clearly indicate that at each Link2Life weekend there were more participants on a Saturday night. The same is true for the first two weekends in 2002. But in 2004 the figures of the Friday nights are always lower than the figures of the following Saturday nights. Thus, it seems likely to have more youth on a Saturday night for an evangelistic event then on a Friday night.

Although the total number of local venues and the percentages of total participants per venue in 2004 are lower than in 2002 the percentages of guests was remarkably higher in 2004. In fact, despite the general lower figures of participants the average number of guests among the participants was with 1,031 people per evening actually higher in 2004 than in 2002 (954 people). This is an average percentage of 23.8% young people with a non-Adventist background per evening, which means that now almost every fourth participant was a guest youth. Not surprisingly, the peak with a percentage of 28% guests was reached with the sixth evening that had the topic ‘sex sells.’ The statement of the title of this Link2Life message was thus proven to be true.

It should be noted here that Link2Life 2002 as well as 2004 was also available live as online stream and was regularly watched by a few hundred from almost around the world (often German students or volunteers abroad). We received feedback from a
few groups in Austria that participated ‘unofficially.’ However, there are no numbers recorded for both the online participants as well as the few Austrians.

Anyway, despite the fact that in general there were less Adventist youth involved in 2004—maybe because a certain segment of the church perceived the Link2Life evangelism as being too progressive or as some might say, ‘worldly’—those who chose to be involved in 2004 brought more friends to the evangelistic events. Link2Life 2002 had more participants in total but Link2Life 2004 had more guests in total. As a matter of fact, less Adventist youth but more non-Adventist guests may be seen as a strong indication that Link2Life—and especially Link2Life 2004—was to a certain extent quite effective in reaching postmodern young people outside of the Adventist church.

The Appreciation of the Evangelistic Program

Although the evangelistic program of Link2Life was centered on the preaching of the gospel message there were various elements that contributed to the message and constituted the evangelistic event. The question is in what respect did the evangelistic program actually reach the youth? How did the young people appreciate the different elements of the program? The following investigation is going to highlight some of the elements and evaluate them according to the research of the quantitative and qualitative data of Link2Life 2002 and 2004.

General Appraisal of the Program

Because the local venues had been connected to the main venue through the Internet immediate feedback from the local leaders and youth came in after every evangelistic event. In order to gain a general picture both the feedback from the local
leaders as well as the individual feedback of the youth sending a response have been taken into consideration.\(^8\)

When the first Link2Life evangelism program was broadcast in 2002 everything was new, at the main venue where the program was live on stage as well as at the local venues where for the first time young people experienced an Adventist youth NET event. Expectations were high as was the suspense of the people. Shortly after the first evening was over feedback came in.

![Figure 3. General appreciation of the Link2Life program 2002 (feedback).]

In reference to figure 3 it can be said that exactly two-thirds of the feedback (66.7\%) were very positive and about a fourth (24.2\%) were rather negative. The rest of the feedback (9.1\%) were saying that the start of the Link2Life evangelism in 2002 was

\(^8\)See the brief description of the qualitative data above.
all right or just dealt with technical issues. In fact, most of the negative feedback were with reference to the music.

The general trend of the feedback revealed that the positive appraisal of the Link2Life 2002 events was constantly increasing with a small drop at the fifth evening. Which again is with reference to the music at that evening. The last evening had with 95.1% the highest percentage of positive feedback. Since the percentages of positive feedback increases in a similar way as the total number of participants from the first to the fourth evangelistic event it can not be said that the increase of positive feedback is because those who disliked the evangelism and its approach have been drawing back or given up, so that only those who liked it remained. The actual content of the negative feedback was almost in any case in reference to the music or the supporting respectively framework program.

With the Link2Life 2002 questionnaire the respondents had the opportunity to rate their general appraisal of the program on a five-point scale. The respective question asked the youth whether the general evangelistic program matched their expectations. Whereas the value five stands for ‘very much’ the value one stands for ‘not at all.’ The value three means ‘neutral.’ The actual mean value for that question is 3.6 and thus the general appraisal of the program is tending towards the value four, which means ‘mostly.’ The same question has been asked in regards to the preaching. Here the mean value is 4.6, which indicates that almost all the respondents valued the preaching with a four or a five.

Two years later in 2004 Link2Life was known among the youth in the Adventist church in Germany and Switzerland. However, the general evangelistic program has
been altered and adjusted based on the experiences of the 2002 initiative but the speaker was the same and thus the young people had a better idea what to expect from this youth evangelism approach. It has already been noted that Link2Life saw more guests coming to the program. Maybe this is also because the youth from the church knew better what Link2Life is all about and therefore were more motivated to invite their friends to the evangelistic events.

The appraisal of the Link2Life program after the first Link2Life evening in 2004 was remarkably higher than in 2002. As figure 4 shows there have been only 1.3% of negative feedback referring to the first evening. The negative feedback over all the evenings represent in fact a vanishingly small number. After five of eight evenings not one single negative feedback came in. The feedback that was rather neutral were most of the time coming from local leaders who have been asking something or referred to technical issues. The vast majority of feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>ok</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I'm @live</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Be a Star</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Backstage</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Delete</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self made Man</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sex sells</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Enjoy it</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Open End</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. General appreciation of the link2life program 2004 (feedback).
In all the Link2Life 2004 feedback there was only 7.7% of all the qualitative terms that express a judgment or appraisal with a clear negative connotation like “nicht gut” (not good), 9 “schlecht” (bad), 10 “enttäuscht/enttäuschend” (disappointed/disappointing), 11 “schade” (pity), 12 or “zu lang” (too long, referring to duration). On the other hand there are 92.3% of the qualitative terms that utter positive appraisals like 279 times “gut” (good) or exactly 100 times the word “super” (superb, great). Especially young people used superlatives like “klasse” (excellent), “toll” (awesome), “spitze” (top class), “genial” (genious), “hammer” (smashing), cool, etc. In total there are 808 occurrences of specific positive appraisals. This means 1.7 occurrences per feedback including all the feedback that are rather of a technical nature. The content analysis of the 276 who gave feedback from 2002 reveals with 1.6 positive appraisals per feedback almost the same figure.

According to the Link2Life 2004 questionnaires 41% of the respondents say that the framework of the program matched their expectations ‘very much’ and another 54% say that it matched their expectations ‘most of the time.’ Only 5% of the respondents say

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9There are only 14 occurrences in 475 feedback that designate something to be “nicht gut.”

10In fact, the term schlecht occurs 17 times in 475 feedback. 1 occurrence refers to the framework program, 4 occurrences refer to the music or the singers, 7 occurrences refer to technical and visual issues, another 1 occurrence refers to the number of expected guests, and 5 occurrences are not judgmental at all but rather suggestive like “it wouldn’t be bad to have this or that.”

11There are only 4 occurrences of this term. Three times it refers to the lower number of guests than expected and one time it refers to the framework program.

12From the 19 times the word schade occurs 10 are in the context of actual disappointment but in contrary 9 are positive like “it’s a pity that Link2Life is over.”

13From the 18 times this expression was used negatively 1 occurrence referred to the preaching, 3 to the framework program prior to the sermon, 13 more specifically to the Link2Life talks, and 1 to the music.
'rarely,' which finally leaves no one to say 'never.'

Although the framework of the program was a matter of discussion in both Link2Life evangelism program it has generally been well received and its appraisal is good. However, there are certain elements of the framework program that were rather controversial, and this refers especially to the music.

**The Music Program**

Long before Link2Life started music was an issue of long debates among the youth leaders that initiated and planned the Link2Life evangelism. It is almost impossible to approach the issue in the Adventist church context with a relaxed attitude and without raising a debate. Among the German Conference and Union youth leaders the debate was between those who argued with the youth outside the church in mind and those arguing with those young and older church members in mind, who generally condemn popular music as inappropriate in a Christian context. In 2001 the Austrian Union decided not to participate in the Link2Life evangelism because of the music proposed. This was more than one year before the first note has been played. Nevertheless, the general consensus was to try to walk on a middle ground.

The music concept in 2002 was based on the idea to invite different Christian bands or musicians and to give the music a more prominent role by starting Link2Life with a mini-concert as some kind of a warm-up act twenty minutes before the actual program started. The respective music bands or musicians also played during the main program and thus framed also the actual message of the Link2Life evening. Inviting actual Christian bands, some with an Adventist background others with an Evangelical
background was an attempt to attract young people and to heighten the event character of Link2Life at the local venues.

The first evening started with the Matthias Hautsch Trio, a rather jazzy music band that played qualitatively high standard music. But as figure 5.6 shows it has not been appreciated by the young people. Of all the feedback (87.5%) referring to the music show their displeasure. To start the first Link2Life evangelism with a music for adults that might please and soften those voices within the Adventist church that feared a rock concert was a rather bad move. The selection of music for the first Link2Life evening also explains, why almost a fourth of the feedback were rather negative (see above).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Matthias Hautsch Trio</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Xsept</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Danielle Vaness &amp; Sebastien Cuthbert</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fade</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Normal Generation</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sarah Brendel</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Appreciation of the music program 2002 (feedback).

The second evening with the group Xsept, just a keyboard player with three female singers (no drums), had a slightly better feedback but still 55.2% of the feedback referring to the music were negative. With Danyelle Vanes (singer) and Sebastian
Cuthbert (piano and acoustic guitar), two professional Christian musicians playing unplugged (no drums), the negative voices were now with 27.3% remarkably lower. The best rates regarding the music had the band Fade, a soft rock band of the brothers Nicholas and Benjamin Zork playing unplugged (with drums). For the fifth Link2Life evening the prominent dance-pop band Normal Generation was invited. This group of 4 Christian youth was third at the German qualification contest for the Eurovision Song Contest in 2002 but the critics were rather harsh after they ‘performed’ at the Link2Life evangelism program. However, although most of the feedback referring to the music at that Link2Life evening were to some extend distinctively negative (53.5%) those in favor were distinctively positive. Aside from the music, one may like it or not, the actual problem with that group was that since they were quite successful at that time in Germany they used Link2Life for their purposes and did not try to fit into the evangelistic context as agreed in advance. However, maybe they just did not understand our specific reservations. The sixth musical act was with Sarah Brendel who was performing unplugged, accompanied by just another acoustic guitar player (no drums). Only 18.7% of the feedback referring to the music was negative. Here the negative feedback mostly criticized the music was too soft.

The feedback referring to the music concept of Link2Life is drawing an ambivalent picture. The numerically more substantial part of the people argued that the music was either too soft (especially on the second, third and sixth evening) and not really youth oriented (especially the first evening). For those voices Fade and Normal Generation (fourth and fifth evening) were most likely suitable for this kind of youth evangelism. Another part of the people criticized the music concept in general as too
'worldly' and the best proof for that attitude was seen with the performance of the group Normal Generation.

When the youth leaders started the planning of Link2Life 2004 the general feeling regarding the music was coined by the impression that this is already a lost game and that the music of Link2Life is the part were one has to live with the biggest compromises. To orient the selection of music on the target group will immediately cause internal problems. However, it was agreed that for Link2Life 2004 the music, especially its content, and the message should be related more directly. In 2004 a Link2Life band was at the heart of the music concept with two female singers and a male singer (all of them young Adventists).

Figure 6. Appreciation of music, soap, talk, and preaching 121 2004 (feedback).
The content analysis of the 2004 feedback reveals that the keyword ‘music’ finds 65.7 negative responses (see figure 6). The general critic is that it is too soft and that singers are not skilled enough. Only a small minority still mentioned that the music is too worldly, especially because there are drums or because the musicians move too much with the beat, which is seen as an inappropriate act of self-display. A good third of the feedback referring to the music of Link2Life 2004 was positive and affirmative.

With the Link2Life 2004 questionnaire the youth could rate the music on a four-point scale—1 means ‘never,’ 2 means ‘rarely,’ 3 means ‘mostly/usually,’ and 4 means ‘very much’—whether it supported the general evangelistic concern of Link2Life, and whether the quality (not the style) of the music was convincing. Sixteen percent responded that the music was never supportive, 34% that it was rarely supportive, 45% said that it was usually supportive, and just 5% rated the music as very supportive. The quality was rated slightly better: 13% never, 22% rarely, 47% usually, 18% very much.

Regarding the selection of music the youth evangelism Link2Life was neither satisfying the expectations of the rather conservative minds nor the minds of the more progressive people, leave alone the actual target group. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the negative feedback in most of the cases did not mean total disapproval of the Link2Life evangelism or the evangelistic framework program but rather were a word of critic on the actual music played or sung. The general appraisal of the Link2Life program, as seen above, was generally very good. The music concept of 2004 was at least coherent with the content of the messages. The songs were in German and its content directly in relation to the respective topic of the evening. However, the best response to the music was when the band Fade was playing, a pop or soft rock group.
**Link2Life Talk and Link2Life Soap**

Part of the regular framework program in 2002 and 2004 was the Link2Life talk. Christian people of interests were invited to talk with about their own faith in God and about issues in their lives that connect with the general topic of the respective message. In 2002 sometimes these guests were the musicians that have been invited. Sometimes these guests were actual national celebrities (see above).

From the 2002 feedback there are only seven feedback referring to the Link2Life Talk, three are positive, one is negative and the other three are rather neutral. In 2004 there were more than forty responses referring to the Link2Life Talk. Figure 5.7 shows that exactly two-third were negatively in tone and another third was positive. What has been mentioned the most is that the talk was too long or a bit boring. Positive remarks were referring to some of the guests, especially Nektarios (see above) or more general that the talk fit well into the theme of the main message.

The Link2Life soap was only an element of the Link2Life 2004 evangelism. The actors were unprofessional youth from the drama group of the Marienhoehe secondary school. According to the feedback (see figure 6) the soap became a much-appreciated element of the Link2Life program. More than 79% of the feedback referring to the soap were very positive. The negative feedback mostly came from the beginning. The actors first were a little nervous but their acting in front of the cameras developed fast. Since the soap was not only related to the actual topic of the respective Link2Life evening but had also a developing story it actually became an element that was heightening the pleasant anticipation of a Link2Life event. To have an ongoing story through the soap was a real benefit for the Link2Life 2004 evangelism.
The Preaching

The heart of the Link2Life evangelism was the preaching. The proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to narrate the biblical message to young people in a way that connects with their lives was the actual reason and justification for this kind of evangelistic initiative and approach. The feedback from Link2Life 2002 and 2004 can help us see whether the message reached the youth. Actually, the vast majority of the feedback both in 2002 and 2004 commented on or made references to the preaching. Regarding the preaching it was important first to identify all the synonyms used to refer to the preaching and then to evaluate each term’s respective context.

As figure 5.8 indicates the preaching of the Link2Life evangelism in 2002 and 2004 has been highly appreciated. In 2002 there are actually 10 feedback responses with a negative appraisal of the preaching out of 146 referring to the actual message. In 2004 there are only 5 feedback negatives out of 281 responses. Most of these negative references refer to the length of the messages. In fact the average duration of a sermon of Link2Life 2002 was almost 37 minutes, including the invitation and prayer at the end of the messages. In 2004 the average duration was a little bit more than 29 minutes.

14 According to the word count there is a total of 181 references in the 2002 feedback but 35 are neutral in the sense that they do not refer to the actual preaching but are titles or appear in a general context.

15 According to the word count there is a total of 347 references in the 2004 feedback but 66 are neutral in the sense that they do not refer to the actual preaching but are titles or appear in a general context.

16 Two voices are criticizing that there is too much ‘black and white’ regarding living with Jesus or ignoring Jesus, another voice felt that there should be more Bible quotations.

17 See Volume 2, Appendix M for a table with the actual duration of each Link2Life sermon broadcasted in 2002 and 2004 and for sermon examples.
Many of the sermons also included an activity or pictures and a few video clips. Nevertheless, although there are only a few complains about the length of the message among the positive feedback the length of the sermons rather mark a maximum duration for a youth evangelistic series. In fact, today the sermons should be shorter, especially if the aim is to speak to unchurched youth who are not used to listening to sermons.

However, the feedback from both the local leaders as well as directly from youth was very positive about the messages. The rather constant and relatively high percentages of guests during Link2Life 2002 and especially during Link2Life 2004 also indicated that the preaching was appealing to people from outside the church context. This has also been mentioned in the feedback. Based on the feedback and the course of the actual numbers and percentages of guests it seems that the way the Gospel has been preached did connect with the youth.

Regarding the content (the topics) of Link2Life it is hardly possible to determine which topic was most appealing since the positive feedback are evenly spread. Often the
feedback that refer to the Link2Life message mention the word wieder like “again great,” “again superb,” etc. Or some say it was even better than yesterday or last Link2Life weekend. But the feedback is not specifically topic related. The only safe statement that can be made is that in both Link2Life evangelism programs the highest number of participants and guests was with the topic “All You Need is Love” (L2L 04/2002) and “Sex Sells” (L2L 06/2004). Addressing relational issues is certainly central for youth evangelism.

The Link2Life 2004 questionnaire asked the youth and the local youth leaders after the evangelism was over to reflect on the messages of the Link2Life evangelism. One question asked whether the preaching style matched with their expectations and the second asked whether the content of the preaching matched their expectations. Again a four-point scale—1 means ‘never,’ 2 means ‘rarely,’ 3 means ‘mostly/usually,’ and 4 means ‘very much’—was offered to rate the preaching. The preaching style was rated with a mean of 3.8 and the content of the preaching has been rated with a mean of 3.7 on the four-point scale. The quantitative as well as the qualitative data reveal that the proclamation of the Gospel was not only ideologically the heart of the Link2Life evangelism but it was so also in reality.

Friendship Evangelism

Although Link2Life had an event character and happened at weekend nights when young people are used to go somewhere and hang out with friends it was clearly recognizable as a Christian or church event. When the youth leaders began to plan the Link2Life evangelism initiative it was clear to them that a project like this will not easily
attract the youth 'on the streets' and is only possible in the context of friendship evangelism.

Therefore Link2Life was always communicated as an evangelistic tool or opportunity for the youth in the church to invite their friends and colleagues from school or work. From a systemic point of view young people in general still have a rather extensive and more intimate network of relationships with people from outside of the church, at least compared to most adult or older members of the church. Alvin Reid says, that “the best way to reach any specific population of unchurched people is through saved people who are members of that same group.” This is a rather general statement but it is confirmed by experience. It certainly applies to the Link2Life evangelism.

In motivating the youth for friendship evangelism the church internal communication of Link2Life was made with a reference to John 1:46 when Philip invited his friend Nathanael to meet Jesus with the words: “Come and see.” The VIP (very important person) prayer card was an additional tool to motivate youth to systematically pray for friends and colleagues over a longer time period before actually inviting them to Link2Life. Something, many obviously did.

At the beginning of this chapter the numbers of guest present at the Link2Life evangelism have already been documented. In 2002 every sixth attendee was a youth with a non-Adventist background and in 2004 every fourth attendee was an actual guest. The correlation between the numbers of church youth with the numbers of guest youth indicates that friendship evangelism was at work.

This is also documented in the feedback as well as in the Link2Life questionnaire. The respondents of the questionnaire document that in 2002 68.2% of all the guests were friends and in 2004 it is documented that 83% of the guest youth attended the Link2Life evangelism because of personal invitation. This is of course a fact that resonates with the experiences of other evangelistic initiatives in this part of Europe. Another 11.1% guests are reported in 2002 and 14% in 2004 to have attended the Link2Life evangelism because they received a personal invitation letter from a youth. In many cases this refers to young people who have been in the church context in the past but left the church or at least stopped attending church activities. However, personal invitation (in person and through letter) refers in 2002 to 79.3% of the guests and in 2004 to even 97%. In 2004 the Adventist youth seemed to be more willing and active in inviting their friends to the Link2Life evangelism. As seen above, in 2004 there were more guests than in 2002 although the total number of participants was lower. The feedback confirms the data from the questionnaires. However, there are also several reports that speak about youth coming because of youth inviting other youth in the streets or published advertisements.

The following statements are exemplary for this experience:

Hi there! The evening was smashing. Unbelievable how many people we had: 67! We absolutely had no more space. Some had to stand. There are now several guest coming regularly. It was really a beautiful evening. . . . The great thing is, that now especially to such big events, there are ex-Adventist youth showing up that otherwise no longer appear [in church]. 19

Friday evening was a doozy: We had so many guests as never before and we even had to put some extra chairs. In total we have been 38 persons (!); we all have been stunned. And depending how you count 15-25 guests: people who once were in contact with the church but also at least 9 young people just from the street. Some have now even been here for the third time [which means since the beginning] – and they are determined to come again because they liked it and have been touched. If


209
you consider how many youth attend a usual church worship you can imagine how exciting this is here for the youth at the moment.\textsuperscript{20}

There are others like this. However, it should also be noted that there are also some statements that tell from guests leaving because of the music, even before the message started, or that no guests at all showed up, or that some guests were looking bored during the message. Nevertheless, regarding the guests (for the main part friends) and their appraisal of the Link2Life evangelism the feedback of the youth is very positive.

What About Results?

Generally speaking, a result is something that can be measured objectively. However, as noted at the beginning of this chapter the results of an evangelistic initiative are only partially measurable because it is not always assessable what the message of the gospel provoked in the heart of the listeners and since certain ‘effects’ will become visible or obvious only after some time. According to the spiritual decision-making process established by Engel\textsuperscript{21} a positive result could be that someone who just had an awareness of a supreme being comes to an awareness of some fundamentals of the gospel message (which is from -8 on the Engel scale to -6) by attending an evangelistic series


\textsuperscript{21}See Volume 2, Appendix K. Though the Engel’s scale is rather schematically constructed and based on a traditional approach to evangelistic communication it helps to understand that decision-making involves process and that a spiritual progress can happen on many different levels. The success of an evangelistic initiative is thus not only to be measured by public decisions or baptisms. Since God is involved in the communication of the Gospel many things might happen immediately or also at another time in an individual’s heart which is not seen or noted by other people.
were the biblical message of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. An evaluation can only assume what the figures are saying about the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Quantitative Impact**

The effectiveness of the Link2Life youth evangelism can be measured to some extent by evaluating the numerical impact. Some of the numerical and statistical data has already been discussed before. The question that remains is what happened with the non-Adventist guests and with the youth in the churches. The Link2Life questionnaires reveal some more details in this respect. About half a year after Link2Life 2002 was over the local youth leaders or pastors reported some figures regarding the immediate impact of the youth evangelism. First of all it is reported that through Link2Life 2002 the local churches received 989 new contacts to young people in their region who agreed to be contacted and invited for other activities of the Adventist youth.

![Bar chart](image)

Figure 8. Impact of Link2Life 2002 half a year later.
Figure 8 highlights some of facts that reveal some growth in numbers. It is reported that because of Link2Life 175 non-Adventist youth who have not been in direct contact with the Adventist church have joined the local Adventist youth club. This is almost one new non-Adventist member for each local venue that participated in the evangelism. These new non-Adventist guests are joined by another 192 Adventist youth who have become new regular visitors of the local Adventist youth club because of Link2Life 2002. About 40 non-Adventist youth are reported to be new regular visitors of the local Adventist churches’ Sabbath worship as well as 158 youth with an Adventist background. How many of these youth are actually young people who have left the church or at least stopped attending worship and have now come back is not reported. Another 174 non-Adventist youth are reported to have bible studies with a local pastor because of Link2Life 2002. This is again almost one non-Adventist youth per local venue. However, it is of course possible that several of these youth are also among those who regularly show up at the youth club meetings. When at the end of 2003 from the eight to the ninth December the GID (the Union boards of the South and the North German Unions) had its annual meeting Martin Knoll (Link2Life coordinator and youth director of the North German Union) could report that by then 90 youth have already been baptized as a direct result of Link2Life 2002 (according to reports from the pastors).
The Link2Life 2004 gives a similar picture. As figure 5.10 displays half a year after the event it is reported that about 142 new non-SDA youth are attending church and 226 guests are attending the youth club meetings and youth worships because of Link2Life 2004. The Link2Life 2004 questionnaires also report that before the summer 2005 already 95 decisions of youth for baptisms are a direct result of Link2Life 2004. The youth evangelism in 2002 and 2004 had for central European terms a rather high number of baptisms directly related to the evangelism, although, in most of the cases Link2Life can not be seen as the only reason. A baptism of a person is hardly ever the result of a single factor. That quite a few of the baptisms of Link2Life refer to teenagers or youth with an Adventist background does not lessen the effectiveness of Link2Life since also these youth do not automatically become Adventist members and need to be won for Christ. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that Link2Life had the strongest impact among the Adventist youth.

However, it should be noted that Link2Life was not an evangelistic program that in classical terms could be named as ‘harvest-evangelism.’ Link2Life was rather sowing
the seed and a seed needs some time to grow. The experiences in the German fields and especially in the Swiss German field correspond with the fact that the Link2Life evangelism programs were an important spiritual impetus for teenagers and youth. An indirect indication for that may be seen in the baptismal numbers of the Swiss German Conference in the time after the Link2Life evangelisms.

The Swiss German Conference with its 29 churches had with 14 local venues in 2002 and 15 in 2004 a very high ratio of youth clubs / churches that participated in the Link2Life youth evangelisms. In fact, in 2002 there have been eleven regional bigger youth clubs with an actual voted leadership and a youth team and in 2004 there have been twelve. Other churches had or still have just a voted youth contact person since there is only a small number of youth and no regular youth club meetings. In The Swiss German Conference therefore more than 80% of the youth clubs were involved in the Link2Life evangelism in 2002 and 2004.

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22 This is the list of official organized youth clubs in 2002: Aargau, Baar, Basel, Bern, Biel, Lotzwil, Luzern, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Thun, Zürich Crami, Zürich Gubi. In 2004 the list has slightly changed because of reorganization: Aargau, Baar, Basel, Bern, Biel, Luzern, Ost-CH Teens, Ostschweiz, Reigoldswil, Schaffhausen, Thun, Zürich.
Figure 10. Total number of baptisms in the Swiss German Conference.

Because of the high percentage of participation among the youth and since the Swiss German Union is rather small and does not have many other factors that could blur the picture it might serve as an example for the impact of the Link2Life evangelism in a Conference.\textsuperscript{2} Also, there have not been any specific evangelistic initiatives in the Conference between 2002 and 2006 apart from the two Link2Life initiatives and the 'regular' church activities. It can be assumed that it would be most likely to observe a statistical relevant effect in this Conference.

As figure 10 shows, there is a striking raise of baptisms in the years following the Link2Life youth evangelism programs. Though the percentages of youth under the age of thirty among the baptisms was always rather high in the Swiss German Conference—for instance between the years 1999 to 2002 the percentage was always about 54.5%.

\textsuperscript{2}Though, it must be mentioned that the Swiss German Conference had in the last 10 to 15 years a rather fast growing immigrant church of South Americans and Angolans in Zürich which contributed to the baptismal numbers.
(average)—in 2003, however, the percentage of youth among the baptismal figures raises
to 77%. In the years 2003 to 2006 the average percentage of youth who have been
baptized is with 63.3% almost ten percentage points higher than before and more than
10% as in the years after this time period. The average ratio of youth baptisms from 2007
to 2010 sank to 50.3%.24

However, the actual numbers of baptisms reported by pastors after Link2Life that
have been in a direct relation to the youth evangelism do certainly appear in the statistics.
Nevertheless, more extensive and thorough study would be needed to document the
impact on baptisms. In the end, there are of course also many limitations in expressing
effectiveness in figures.

Among the feedback there are also several that report about decisions taken
because of Link2Life. The following two statements shall give an impression:

Hi there! Link2Life is just great! It was funny and enjoyable. I would like to attend
each weekend a Link2Life event. Keep on doing this! I am already looking forward
to the next Link2Life in 2004. I wish it would again be with Stephan, Anne-Kathrin,
Markus, and Freddy. Stephan really touched me with his messages. I thought all 6
events to be brilliant. I now decided to get baptized.25

There are many things I am grateful about. Last Sabbath after L2L two 16 years old
boys came to me and first they were beating around the bush but then they finally
said that they want to be baptized. L2L is after all a very pleasant and positive
experience for me. I only have a hard time to understand why rather ‘big’ churches
like Charlottenburg or Neukölln miss such a chance—maybe, I don’t have to
understand this.26

24The figures are taken from the Swiss German Conference reports presented to the delegates of
the general assembly of the Conference every two years.


26#24-W2, Feedback L2L 2004: 2. Weekend. See also for example: #11-W3, Feedback List L2L
Qualitative Impact

Besides the actual numbers respectively individual young people from inside but also outside the church context who have been reached and touched by the Link2Life youth evangelism the question is what impact did Link2Life had for the local youth clubs or youth in the churches that participated.

The Link2Life questionnaires did ask the local youth leaders about the impact of Link2Life on the relationships among the youth in their church, whether Link2Life improved the relationship between the youth and the church (leadership, members), whether Link2Life improved their general Identification with the Adventist church, and whether Link2Life improved the personal motivation to be active in mission.

Figure 5.12 shows the percentages of those responding that there has been a significant (spürbar) improvement in the respective areas. Since most of the youth clubs / church youth that participated in 2002 also participated in 2004 it is assumed that the impact of the first Link2Live was stronger than the second. Link2Life 2004 was based on the experiences of 2002 and therefore can be seen as a continuation of the experience.

Figure 11. Areas of significant improvement through L2L 2002 & 2004.

217
The Link2Life youth evangelism had a very strong effect on the improvement of the relationships or bonding among the youth of a local venue respectively of the youth club or church. After the Link2Life 2002 evangelism 79.2% of all the local venues report a significant improvement. After the 2004 evangelism still 52.5% report an improvement or further improvement. The relational improvement is of course especially a fruit of the event character of Link2Life. Much feedback for instance refer to the ‘great’, ‘awesome’, ‘excellent’ atmosphere on site. Link2Life was not just a conjoined listening to an evangelistic sermon. In addition, it was also a place to hang out with friends before and after the main evangelistic program on screen. Further, it is to expect that the working together for the event and being involved in mission activities with other youth from the church in the streets does have a positive effect on the relationships. In this respect, the Link2Life evangelism was offering an opportunity for local youth groups to be involved together in an evangelistic project.

To some extent Link2Life did also have a lasting effect on the youth’s relationship with their local church. At least almost every fifth youth club reports that there was a significant improvement. It is assumed that this is especially true at places where the local church leadership and the pastor have been actively supporting the youth evangelism. This was not everywhere the case. Although Link2Life has always been promoted as an evangelism of the whole church lead by the young people there have been places where the youth did not have a lot of active church support, apart from the money. Link2Life was often in danger of being perceived solely as a youth thing. However, it was one strong concern of Link2Life to heighten the awareness of the churches’ responsibility to reach out to young people and there have been quite a few places where
this actually happened. Not all of that may be documented in the above figures.

There are also reports of positive improvement of the general identification of the youth with the Seventh-day Adventist church. In some of the feedback this is also documented. After the fifth Link2Life evening in 2004 someone wrote: “This evening followed on seamlessly the past two. It was really great! ... I think it to be genius that you always try to improve things and that you are not just doing your thing. This has certainly revamped my picture of the Adventist leadership.” Or a German youth leader assistant reported quite excited what they are doing and experiencing at their local venue and then concludes: “

Link2Life goes down well. We always had a lot of guests (in relation to our 15 youth) - we have 10 to 15! These are great results, since two years ago [Link2Life 2002] we had to be ‘happy’ with 3-5 guests. Altogether we all are enthusiastic about Link2Life. You do a great job – big compliments to all of you!! I am proud to be part of this youth evangelism and to be able to say: that’s my church!!!

Link2Life is also reported to have improved the motivation of young people for mission. After 2002 almost half of all participating youth clubs or churches reported, in fact 49%, that the evangelism significantly heightened the motivation to be involved in mission and in evangelism. After the 2004 evangelism still a good third (32.2%) specifically state that the motivation improved significantly. In a feedback after the third Link2Life weekend in 2004 a youth leader wrote:

We are totally motivated. The program of L2L is working great here, not only from a technical point of view but also regarding its message. Here in Siegen we always empty the whole church and put some tables inside so that we can easily sit and talk with some snacks before and after the program. It is a pity that L2L is soon going to

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end. However, we will continue. We want to organize a youth-action-week in order to excite more youth for Jesus. 29

In the 2002 questionnaire the youth leaders were asked whether they can see a significant improvement of the spirituality in their youth club. A significant improvement testified to by 47.2% of the respondents. It has been noted that the corporate experience of the spirituality and worship a youth can have in the context of his faith community directly affects his or her personal spiritual life. This correlation has led Dean and Foster to the conclusion “that worship is primary for youth ministry, including the integration of youth into the worship life of the congregation.” 30 Although Link2Life was just a temporary evangelistic event it provided for the teenager and youth in the time the evangelism was running an experience of Christian community and corporate spirituality that made an impact on the spiritual life of youth. The 2004 questionnaire did not include this question but it asked the youth leaders whether new youth clubs or new youth small groups have been founded because of the Link2Life evangelism.

It was one of the explicit attempts of Link2Life—as a positive and lasting side effect—to foster the organizing of new youth clubs in regions or churches where there have been none before. According to the responses the inception of about 18 (10.2%) new youth clubs in Germany caused by the Link2Life are documented. Some of the feedback from both Link2Life 2002 and 2004 also refer to the establishing of new groups. In 2002 a local leader wrote: “Team: 9. Guests: 7. Other Adventist youth: 4. Youth with Adventist background: 1. In total: 21! Today everything was working


30 Dean and Foster, The Godbearing Life, 196.
excellently!! It was brilliant!! We are excited. By our standards we were really many people today! God's blessings. PS: Today we founded our youth club!!"31 Although officially Austria did not participate in the Link2Life evangelisms there have been a few non-registered groups (they are not in the statistics). A youth leader from Mistelbach wrote after the evangelism in 2002: "We have been a small group. Unfortunately there were occasionally some technical problems with our satellite receiver. But the main thing is: God has blessed us. As a fruit of this work [Link2Life 2002] we decided to meet every two weeks for a youth bible study group."32 In 2004 someone reported that with the beginning of the Link2Life evangelism a new youth club has been established and Link2Life is giving the group the actual take off.33 Another young leader from Essen reported: "Among our youth many things have happened. This week we laid the foundation for a youth small group where we can also talk about the issues of our everyday life."34 After the evangelism in 2004 a youth leader from the church in Wasserburg concluded: "Altogether the event was really successful, which did bring us as new established youth club much closer together."35

This feedback confirm that Link2Life did have a structural and thus also a lasting impact. New youth groups and clubs have come to life. After all one can say said that Link2Life did in fact serve as a catalyst for the foundation of new youth clubs and youth

small groups in Germany, and even in Austria.

**Unexpected Result: Reaching Both, Young and Old**

Link2Life has been officially planned and designed to target the age group of the fifteen to eighteen years old or more generally the youth below the age of twenty. Young adults have been seen and understood to be another actual target group. However, when Link2Life was running in 2002 but also in 2004 the question was raised whether the evangelism is actually reaching the teens and younger youth. This question has especially been raised in the light of the music that has been played. Though, the music was contemporary and of good quality, it has been perceived by many to be too sophisticated and not on the level of teens. Also the preaching was questioned whether it is actually reaching the teens. Some were suggesting that it is rather for the youth between the ages of eighteen to twenty five of years. Although initially the youth under twenty were in view when Link2Life was planned the question was, what age group did the Link2Life evangelism actually reach and touch. The feedback has given some insight to answer this question and there have been some unexpected results.

After the first evening of Link2Life 2004 a pastor who was actively involved in the organization of the Link2Life evangelism in his church send a very positive feedback but questioned whether the concept is reaching the younger youth:

Hello to the whole L2L-team. In my view the first evening was successful. Some nerviness here and there but that did not compromise the general impression. Stephan’s message was again great. Also the other program elements were well attuned. The soap was well received among the youth, if I interpret their reactions correctly. . . . However, if I did understand [the promotion of Link2Life] correctly the target group was the youth under twenty years of age. Here I am very curious whether they will actually be reached. As a forty years old guy and having
experienced the first evening I think that the style is more suitable for youth in their mid-twenties. But let’s see what the actual target group is going to say.\textsuperscript{36}

After the second evening of the first Link2Life weekend in 2004 the pastor obviously spoke to the teens that attended the evangelism and he responded to the question he raised in his first feedback in the following way:

Hi to all team members. All in all the second evening was another successful event. I did make inquiries among the teens and my estimation from yesterday—that the style is rather reaching the mid-twenties—has not been confirmed at all. Stephan with his preaching is absolutely hitting the mark among the age-group of the teens. However, the music is not received with a lot of excitement but that is not a problem. Among the teens I talked to the music was just a secondary issue. The first two evenings so far have been very well received here. I am excited to see what you invest to win the hearts of our youth and of their friends for Jesus.\textsuperscript{37}

In fact there have been many other feedback that confirmed somehow also surprisingly that the message actually reached the youngest among the youth. This applies also to the Link2Life messages of 2002. After the fourth evening for instance a father wrote: “I would like to give you a positive feedback regarding the events. They have been completely successful. I receive a very good feedback from my daughter (15): She is emotionally touched by the messages and that is great.”\textsuperscript{38} In a similar way some younger church member responded: “The messages are really cool. If we are honest, we like them more than the other NET sermons [referring to previous NET evangelisms, see above]. They are suitable for juveniles and even our youngest visitors have been totally excited.”\textsuperscript{39} A thirteen years old girl was writing: “I am Tabea and regularly attend with

\textsuperscript{36} #23-W1, Feedback L2L 2004: 1. Weekend.

\textsuperscript{37} #32-W1, Feedback L2L 2004: 1. Weekend.

\textsuperscript{38} #52-4, Feedback L2L 2002: 4. Evening.

\textsuperscript{39} #43-4, Feedback L2L 2002: 4. Evening.
my sisters . . . (I am 13) the L2L events. L2L was very interesting. Yesterday’s topic I liked especially and I was thinking to myself: It’s a pity that right now my friends cannot see this! I have invited some of them but either they had no time or were not interested in such a ‘religious bullshit.’ A youth magazine of a local newspaper (non religious background) published a lengthy article about the interactive youth event ‘Jump in’ of one of the Link2Life venues in the region. A nineteen year old girl and a fifteen year old boy were also interviewed:

Tabea, 19 years: ‘I liked the format of the program and the message of Stephan Sigg even exceeded my expectations. Only the music could have been more lively.’ But Johannes, 15 years old, said: ‘Actually, I had other expectations. The design was rather strange. Nevertheless, all in all I could cope with that during the program but the message of Stephan Sigg was actually super.’

There was more feedback that confirmed the fact that Link2Life actually reached the initially targeted age group of the fifteen to eighteen years old and even younger teens although Link2Life actually turned out to be not a typical teenager evangelism.

A rather unexpected result of Link2Life was the fact that although the evangelism was clearly targeting adolescents also young adults an other age groups were reached by this kind of evangelistic preaching. There are quite a number that testify that also older generations have been touched by the evangelism and the messages. After the last Link2Life evening in 2002 a local leader was making a résumé of the evangelism and wrote:

And now kudos to all that contributed to the program. We have been watching Link2Life in a church of an old-age home and even from the elderly sisters and brothers we received very positive feedback! They often said, the music is not our world but the message is the most important thing and it has reached us! And also

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our non-Adventist guests were convinced from the program concept. Even people who have never been here before and who have been invited during our street activities have given very impressive feedback! I think your program was richly blessed by God.42

Several others refer to older generations that have been touched by the Link2Life youth evangelism. After the second evening in 2002 someone wrote: “Generally, absolutely great feedback from all generations! Everyone here is excited!”43 A pastor from Switzerland wrote in 2004: “You have not only reached teens but people from other generations too with your thoughts.”44 In a similar way a church leader wrote: “Hello, dear ones. Link2Life is not only great for our young people—but also for us over 30/40/50 years old.”45

Communication professionals have urged the importance to know your target group. They say that “the basic question to ask is, Whom do you want to reach?”46 since “there really is no such thing as ‘the public’, as society has many segments.”47 The youth leaders of the Link2Life planning team did take this fact seriously when they designed the evangelistic program. Also the messages were directed to young people. But the feedback at hand as well as many of the testimonies that were heard confirm the fact that not only young people have been reached. In fact, even old people were excited. In the time I was teaching at the Adventist University in Friedensau (Germany) where also a big

44#50-W1, Feedback L2L 2004: 1. Weekend.
45#12-W1, Feedback L2L 2004: 1. Weekend.
46Kathy Bonk, Henry Griggs, and Emily Tynes, Strategic Communications for Nonprofits (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 46.
47Ibid., 47.
residential home for elderly people is situated many of the old people did praise
Link2Life when ever they saw me.

In the end it seems to be true that when the church is actually determined to
communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that young people are reached and
are able to connect also the other generations are reached. A truth that does not really
work the other way round!

A New Approach That Motivates People to Invite Guests

Several respondents mentioned that Link2Life encouraged them to see
evangelism in a new light. After the first Link2Life weekend in 2004 a young adult
wrote:

Hello Link2Life Team. So far I only experienced evangelisms that worked with
pressure just to experience that this sired up negative reactions among the guests I
invited. That is why I first was not open to invite people for Link2Life. But already
the first evening left me with excitement and now I can invite people without
hesitation. Thank you, now I have also got to know a new way to evangelize.48

In a very similar way someone else wrote that past experiences left him with the
impression that evangelism is always connected to scare tactics and evangelists build up
pressure to force people to take a decision. Therefore he first did not adventure to invite
people to Link2Life but that changed after the first Link2Life program.49 Another youth
wrote: “Link2Life provides an excellent opportunity to make the Gospel palatable for
you young people and to bring one’s friend along without being ashamed of.”50

48#8-W1, Feedback L2L 2004: 1. Weekend,
49See, #47-W1, Feedback L2L 2004: 1. Weekend.
The Follow-Up

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association “teaches that 45 percent of the effort in a campaign is preparation, 10 percent is proclamation, and a full 45 percent is follow-up, or preservation. Nearly half of the effort needs to focus on preserving the harvest.”\textsuperscript{51} This is certainly a deep truth. Evangelism is so much more than an event. It is also so much more than just proclamation. Evangelism is finally happening from heart to heart, from person to person and this needs a relational context. The follow-up of an evangelistic initiative like Link2Life is therefore only possible in the context of the local church where real and authentic people are involved. Webber said: “All the various forms of evangelism can be treated as the inquiry stage of evangelism. Evangelism brings people to the door of the church, where the process of continuing what has begun can be carried out.”\textsuperscript{52} In this sense the follow-up becomes the main activity of any kind of evangelistic initiative. However, although everyone would agree in theory the evangelistic praxis is often different. Soon after an evangelistic event is over the church is back to business as usual. To some extent that can also be said about the Link2Life evangelism.

Since Link2Life was a satellite broadcasted event and more or less independent from the local contexts in the preparing and conducting of the evangelistic program it was totally dependent on the local contexts regarding the follow-up. The numbers of bible studies and baptisms reveal that there have been youth leaders and pastors deeply engaged in the spiritual journeys of young people that have been touched by Link2Life.

\textsuperscript{51}Allison and Anderson, \textit{Going Public With the Gospel}, 147.

\textsuperscript{52}Webber, \textit{Ancient-Future Faith}, 152.
A whole section in the Link2Life handbook was actually explaining necessary steps and dealing with the evangelistic rhythm of preparation, get in contact (advertisement, reaching out), foster personal decision, integrate and accompany. There have been many good collections of ideas and material for youth club meetings, youth worships and even Bible studies in the Link2Life folders respectively handbooks that were at hand for all the local venue leaders. Many local youth have been involved in follow-up activities.

Nevertheless, most of the activities that followed Link2Life were happening in the youth but not really in the church context. One goal of the Link2Life evangelism was also to bring churches and local pastors and leader to the realization of central importance to reach young people, connect with them and foster the local churches to be or become true spiritual homes for youth. Link2Life was certainly different than former evangelistic programs. It did had a clear Adventist and Christ-centered message, testified even by some critics, and it also did portray a church culture that was appealing to many young people in but also outside the church. The local congregations, however, were back to business soon after all the decorations and installations, the technics, the bar, the drinks and snacks, the cozy atmosphere, etc. was cleared and stowed away. Many churches have not even been really affected by the young people gathering in the evenings of the Link2Life weekends in their basements or side rooms. The dream that Link2Life would have an effect on the church itself and as a follow-up also foster some change that brings the worshipping community closer to the hearts and spiritual needs of the youth was maybe too ambitious and hardly achievable by such a kind of evangelistic initiative.

In 2002 a church member and father of a daughter that attended Link2Life wrote
that he sees a problem between the culture and style of Link2Life, which is appealing to young people, and with the culture of the church. After he was praising the music and the message he wrote:

But I have a problem. The young people that are appealed and touched by your event often experience in the churches quite the opposite of what you are creating. I really wish that there are impulses going out from Link2Life to the churches and that in general our worships become livelier and more up to date in order to be appealing for today’s people.\(^\text{53}\)

It could be argued that the Link2Life 2004 evangelism was somehow a follow-up of the 2002 initiative. Having experienced the impact of the Link2Life evangelism the church administrations in Germany and Switzerland did recognize the church’s responsibility to reach out to young people and the importance of youth evangelism. Otherwise Link2Life would have been a single event. After all, because the impact of Link2Life 2002 and 2004 was very positive it was finally possible to have another Link2Life evangelism in 2008. This time the evangelism was mainly organized as a studio production of the German Media Center and as a program for the Hope Channel. However, for a short time youth evangelism was back on the agenda of the church.

**Summary**

The evaluation of the Link2Life evangelisms in the years 2002 and 2004 can be based on quantitative as well as qualitative data. The youth evangelism has been well received in the German fields as well as in the Swiss German Conference. Officially, Austria did not participate in both of the Link2Life youth evangelisms. The Link2Life initiative in 2002 started with a high number of participants and even did increase in

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numbers over the following evening events. The same has been true for the Link2Life evangelism in 2004. Although Link2Life 2002 had more participants in total the Link2Life evangelism 2004 had more actual guests. Although a slightly lower number of Youth clubs respectively churches participated in the youth evangelism in 2004 the experience of the first Link2Life obviously encouraged the Adventist young people to invite more of their friends and colleagues to this kind of church organized evangelism.

The correlation between the growing numbers of Adventist youth and non-Adventist guests in both youth evangelisms hint to the fact that the young people were deeply committed and involved with the mission activity of the church to reach out to their peers. The guest figures in correlation with the number of Adventist youth underline the fact that relational factors and reasons are the strongest for non-Adventist youth to attend an evangelistic event. That the guest figures steadily grew also hints to the fact that most of the guests attended regularly and thus were actually reached and touched by the message and the program.

Although the program elements have been received quite differently by the youth and were rather ambiguous, especially the music, the overall program was very well accepted and highly appreciated. The preaching was especially highly valued in style as well as in content. The sermons were rather long but the feedback shows that this was hardly an issue—even for unchurched youth. On the contrary, the messages have actually reached the young people from within and outside the church context and connected to their life realities. Though the preaching was aiming at young people under the age of twenty it actually did reach not only the youth but in fact all age groups.

As a result of both Link2Life 2002 and 2004 at least more than 180 people got
baptized and many hundred new contacts to young people could have been made during and after the evangelism. Link2life directly contributed to and positively influenced the numbers of baptisms in the following years of the evangelisms. In many places the number of youth club member increased as well as visitors of youth worships. At least 18 new youth clubs and youth prayer groups have been founded as a fruit of Link2Life. In general the evangelism fostered and strengthened the bonding and relationships among the youth in the church and especially motivated them to be personally active in the mission of the church.

Although the rather progressive style of the Link2Life youth evangelisms also found some critics who feared that the church was aligning itself too much to the world but such voices were very small in number. However, the Link2Life evangelism also brought to light that there is a significant gap between the worshipping culture of the Adventist community and such a kind of youth evangelism that actually attracts and touches the non-Adventist friends and unchurched youth. The fact that the church administration asked the youth departments at the end of 2002 to soon organize another Link2Life evangelism program can be seen as sign that the church started to see youth evangelism as a central concern of the churches mission.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a missionary movement since its very beginnings. Mission is the church's "first priority—the very reason our church exists."¹ The Gospel Commission to tell the world about Jesus does not only imply to reach out to all parts of the world, to every tribe and nation, but it also implies to focus upon every dimension of human existence and all developmental stages.

**Youth Evangelism a Missional Priority**

It has been shown that in terms of world mission and cross-cultural evangelism the youth today can be seen as the biggest and most growing unreached group of people. From a developmental point of view the life stage of adolescence is one of the most receptive for the Gospel of Jesus Christ since youth are about to find and settle a coherent life narrative, their own set of values, as well as their individual identity and purpose. In this light it comes not as a surprise that recent empirical studies about the religious and spiritual lives reveal that both, conversion as well as apostasy are specific phenomena of adolescence. Youth are souls in transition.

However, due to the prolongation of the adolescent life period it can no longer

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just be seen as well-defined time of transition or as the one decisive transformational period that prepares the individual for adulthood and determines the future course of life. Adolescence has become more and more a life period in its own right and must be seen “as a period with special needs and with special possibilities but not as the one exceptional time for claiming or creating one’s faith for the remainder of one’s life.” It would be a misunderstanding to limit evangelism to young people. Nevertheless, adolescence is crucial and most of the decisions for Christ are made in the time of youth. “There are heightened developmental factors contributing to a state of conversion readiness during adolescence. . . . More people make key choices to follow Christ during their teenage years that at any other time period in life.”

Young people, therefore, need to be at the center of the church’s missional focus. It seems that the question Ellen G. White raised more than a century ago, “why should not labor for the youth in our borders be regarded as missionary work of the highest kind?,” is more up to date then ever. Although the age of youth is rather a new sociological phenomenon and started to become a societal force exactly in the times Ellen White raised that question youth evangelism is still a subordinate concern of the Adventist church. In fact, it can be said that youth evangelism has never been high on the agenda of the Christian churches’ mission endeavors. This is also reflected in a

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4White, *Gospel Workers*, 207.
significant lack of literature in the field of youth evangelism. Throughout the last century church sponsored youth ministries soon shifted from their initial evangelistic focus to reach out to unchurched youth to a nurturing ministry for the youth in the church. Youth ministries often became the substitute agents for the responsibilities of the local church and faith communities to be a nurturing and empowering spiritual home of young people.

Therefore, the Adventist church needs to refocus its missional agenda, relocate youth ministry into the context of the intergenerational faith community, and make youth evangelism a priority of its worldwide outreach and proclamation of the Gospel.

Identity, purpose and community have been identified to be the three basic bridges for reaching postmodern people. These are also central themes of adolescence. In making youth evangelism a missional priority the church learns to more effectively respond to the questions and needs of the people of today. Since young people quite naturally belong much more to the presence and the present culture than the older generations youth evangelism constantly challenges the church to be in motion and to communicate the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ and His story of salvation in an ever relevant way.

**Postmodern Youth Evangelism: Incarnational and Contextual**

Webber states that “postmodern evangelism is not so much an argument but a display.” Although such a statement is in danger to oversimplify a complex issue he certainly points into the right direction. While modern approaches of evangelism in an

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6Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 63.
apologetic way primarily believed in reason, logic, and ‘proof’ to convince people of the
truth postmodern or even post-postmodern approaches need to be more holistic, systemic,
and relational. Especially in regards to reaching youth and introducing them to Jesus
Christ it is true that "postmodern persons are converted to the community before they are
converted to Christ."\textsuperscript{7} "The ultimate key," so Grenz, "is ‘community.’"\textsuperscript{8}

Youth Evangelism today is neither thinkable nor practicable apart from the
context of a genuine believing, loving, and authentically living intergenerational
community of faith. "Evangelism," says Bosch, "is only possible when the community
that evangelizes—the church—is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and
exhibits an attractive lifestyle."\textsuperscript{9} Finally, "the Christian church is a social reality that is
called to embody the gospel."\textsuperscript{10} This is a basic truth that especially resonates with our
postmodern times and applies to youth evangelism as well. Because "the best apologetic
we have in the postmodern context is the vibrant, local community of disciples who are
loyal to Christ, that is, a community in which the power of the Spirit is transforming
relationships."\textsuperscript{11} Basically, youth evangelism needs to be incarnational and thus needs a
strong and compelling ‘home-base’ since youth do not just want to hear the truth but they
want to see and experience what it means to live in a relationship with Jesus. Effective
and long-term youth evangelism must be church and thus community based. Youth

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, 414.
\textsuperscript{10} Kreider, "They Alone Know the Right Way to Live," 184.
\textsuperscript{11} Bos, \textit{Next Wave}; ibid.
evangelism therefore starts with and within the local church community and not with a specific evangelistic project or event.

An incarnational concept of youth evangelism cannot be separated from a contextual approach. “Incarnational mission will seek ongoing contextualization of the Good News, searching for languages and forms in which to express it clearly.”

It is thus crucial to speak the language of the culture young people are born into and to respond to the postmodern shift so that the Gospel becomes relevant or ‘clear’ and youth can connect to the biblical message and way of life. However, “relevance does not come simply from imitating culture or mirroring the techniques of Hollywood and Madison Avenue. It does not depend upon the adoption of electronic hardware in worship. Relevance is derived from experimenting with authentic and indigenous practices that emerge from the gift mix of a particular congregation or a local community.”

Therefore, relevancy is less an evangelistic technique than a genuine Christian life experienced in an authentic faith community not separated from but adapted to today’s world. Nevertheless, since youth evangelism is always also a cross-cultural endeavor it needs to be contextualized and thus be aware of young people’s specific life situations and realities.

However, one of the major problems of the youth evangelism Link2Life was that while there was an attempt to be sensitive and adaptive to the life realities of youth there was hardly any congruence with the spiritual culture of the local churches. Effective

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youth evangelism is in need of faith communities that are ready to welcome young people and be more adaptive to their spiritual needs while at the same time youth evangelistic projects need to be compatible with the actual church experience.14 Such a cultural dichotomy is less likely when youth evangelism flows out from a local church community that is committed to reach out to young people in relational ways.

Less Professional Evangelists, More Authentic Witnessers

In the light of the amazing early church growth experience where there is hardly any account of public preaching or of any evangelistic campaign and where there are even “no examples of leaders urging the believers to be evangelistic,”15 Kreider observes that effective evangelism happened in the homes, where the church met, and in market and work places, where Christians mingled with the pagans. In the public and every day life “Christians were in their typical mode—face-to-face communication—relationships began, friendships developed and people discovered that Christians were attractive and intriguing.”16 “The Christians did not offer the world intellectual formulas; they offered a way of life rooted in Christ,”17 so Kreider concludes his study of the evangelistic ‘methods’ of the early Christian church. Youth evangelism in a postmodern and more and more post-Christian context somehow calls the Christian church to remember and

14 ''There must be an intentional congruence between the language and methods of evangelization, catechesis, worship, and ministry in our churches.” Todd E. Johnson, “Truth Decay,” 131. “Evangelization must take into consideration the task of enculturating those children growing up in the community in ways that are consistent with the process of evangelization used for those outside the church.” Ibid., 138.


16 Ibid., 171.

17 Ibid., 177.
apply its basic evangelistic roots. Basically, effective and long-term youth evangelism is not calling for professional evangelists but rather for authentic witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of every day life and a genuine Christian community. Although it is certainly true that “the most fruitful youth evangelism will be derived from strategies that have young people telling their friends the good news of life in Jesus Christ”\(^\text{18}\) youth evangelism is not to be limited to a peer-to-peer strategy. Since “today’s younger people seek out intergenerational communities where they mix and form relationships with all ages”\(^\text{19}\) youth evangelism should be community based, relational and thus a missional concern of the whole church and not just the youth departments or of some professionals. Youth evangelism, as seen, must basically flow from a genuine community of believers and is thus primarily a ministry of “the laity,”\(^\text{20}\) authentic followers of Christ that reach out to young people “through social networking.”\(^\text{21}\)

**Evangelistic Event in a Systemic Context**

The fact that effective and long-term youth evangelism starts with and within the community of believers does not neglect the value and importance of evangelistic events. Although Link2Life with its media based approach can be seen as mass evangelism with

\(^{18}\)Rahn and Linhart, *Contagious Faith*, 19.

\(^{19}\)Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 52.

\(^{20}\)A missionary encounter with the West will have to be, primarily, a ministry of the laity . . . for two reasons: first, the church’s witness will be much more credible if it comes from those who do not belong to the guild of pastors; and second, only in this way will we begin to bring together what our culture has divided, the private and the public . . . to take this one step further: in the context of the secularized, post-Christian West our witness will be credible only if it flows from a local, worshiping community.” David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 59.

\(^{21}\)Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 57.
the advantage to reach many youth at various places at the same time, the actual value and strength of such an approach in the context of a long-term youth evangelistic strategy lies in the fact that the proclamation of the Gospel was also a local happening with many different elements, an event rooted in a youth group or church context that resonated with the culture youth are familiar with. Youth like events where they can experience something, bring their friends, meet others, hang out, chat, eat and drink. Such a specific youth evangelistic project would not have worked if it had been just an invitation to a sermon. Event evangelisms still can have an impact in a broader youth evangelistic strategy of the church.

But basically a youth evangelistic event or mass evangelism like Link2Life needs to be seen as (and actually only can be) a supportive evangelistic means in a systemic and relational context. A youth evangelistic event that does not ‘flow’ from a community of believers committed to reach out to young people and provide a spiritual home for the emerging adult will ultimately hang in the clouds. The experience of Link2Life underlines the importance that youth evangelism needs to be a concern of the whole church and not just of a department and it needs to be embedded in a long-term missional strategy that is based on a relational and process oriented understanding of evangelism. Webber is pointing in the same direction by referring to the fact that “the Great Commission demonstrates that Jesus did not introduce various programs for evangelism, discipleship, and Christian formation. Instead, following in the tradition of Hebraic holism, Jesus taught that becoming a disciple is a process that takes place in a continuous way in the worship and community life of the church.”

22 Webber, Ancient-Future Evangelism, 22.
After all, youth evangelism, especially in a postmodern context, has to be seen first and foremost as a long-term, community based, and Christ-centered approach of a local, intergenerational family of faith that is committed to relationally reach out to young people in society through social networking. In such a broader context a specific youth evangelistic event like Link2Life still can have a real impact.

**Fostering and Funding Youth Evangelism**

Since there is ample evidence of the fact that adolescence is a time of transition and decision-making and that young people form the most receptive group of people for the Gospel the Adventist Church should be much more intentional in fostering and funding specific projects of youth evangelism. Youth evangelism needs to be at the top of the church’s missional agenda and therefore budgeting needs to respond to that priority. Special efforts are necessary to equippe, encourage and financially support young people to invent and implement new ideas and strategies to relationally as well as contextually reach out to their peers with the good news of Jesus Christ.

The future of the Church is finally also determined by the questions whether and how committed its leaders, congregations, and ministries are to provide ressources to reach out to young people, connect with them, nurture their spiritual needs, and let them participate in shaping the life and mission of their church. Finally, a growing church is a church where youth are reached and involved. There is in fact scientific data which shows that “congregations with high levels of youth involvement are also the ones more likely to be growing.”

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APPENDIX A BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY

Old Testament Terminology

The most prominent term for child in the Hebrew Old Testament by far is the word *ben* which appears according to Koehler/Baumgartner 4850 times.\(^1\) It can mean son or (male) child, grandson or just an individual. The word is also used as a familiar address from an older more experienced human to a younger less experienced man. It has also a strong collective connotation meaning member of a people, tribe or a special group especially when it is in plural.\(^2\) Actually it is striking that *ben* is often found in a compound to another noun, "son(s) of", "member(s) of" indicating that each individual is always a descendent of someone else and belongs. The root of the word *ben* is formed by two Hebrew letters, *bet* and *nun*, each of which has its own meaning since the Hebrew alphabet had been derived from ancient pictograms. The letter *bet* is based on a picture of a house or tent and the letter *nun* is based on a picture of a seed. The growing seed indicates a new generation of life that continues the cycle of life. Combined in the word *ben* these two letters have the primordial meaning of "seed of the house" or "to continue the house". With a son the "house", the family or tribe has a future and the life of the house continues. Thus it is not surprising that in biblical time children and especially male children had been considered as the greatest blessing of God and being without children the greatest curse.\(^4\)

The most commonly used word for a feminine child is *bath* and it occurs 585 times\(^5\) which is more than eight times less than the correspondent *ben*. This reflects already the fact that in biblical times the sons, as in general males, attract much more

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2 In Exodus (Exod 1:9.12) we find the first reference for the connection *benei israel* as the term to denote the whole people of Israel and not just the actual sons of Israel respectively Jacob. Thenceforward it is the most prominent expression in the Old Testament to refer to the people of God.
3 The expression "sons of" appears 1567 times in the Old Testament.
4 See Gen 15:2.3 for the first reference of this thinking.
5 Koehler and Baumgartner, 158.
interest. The basic meaning of *bath* is daughter, and in a figuratively sense it is designing the belonging to a group. It is also used to designate the resident population of a certain place (town, nation, et al.). In this respect the compound “daughter of Zion” designates first of all the people of Zion as unit. The Hebrew *bath* is used for several stages of life. It can refer to a girl or young woman, even Sarah Abrahams wife is called a daughter of ninety years (see Gen 17:17).

There are plenty of other and more specific words in the Old Testament that refer to children or youth. They are mentioned here in alphabetic order.

The word *bachur* in the singular and the plural refers usually to the young, fully developed, vigorous, fit for military service, sometimes even handsome but always unmarried man. In this respect there are according to Lisowsky 45 references in the Old Testament. Closely connected are the expressions *bechuroth* and *becherim*. Both denote the period or the age of youth—the youthful age. There are according to Lisowsky only three references, two for *bechuroth* and one for *becherim*. As very early derivatives of the root *bachar* to choose, to elect or to examine these terms are according to Seebass stereotyped and became independent. However, in the Akkadian the root could also refer to young and strong soldiers, elected guards or chosen members of the elite troops. This meaning is also reflected in the Old Testament. Thus, the connection between the terms young man and chosen or elected is not by accident. Apart of the military context the root *bachar* may even point to the high esteem the young, strong man had in a Semitic culture and suggests the idea that the grown-up young man—especially the first born son—was the pride of the family. In this respect he could by all means be seen as ‘the chosen,’ ‘the elected,’ and prime heir of that family.

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6 E.g. Isa 16:2; Jer 46:24.
7 About twenty times in the OT, ex. Isa 1:8; Ps 9:15.
8 Following the Hebrew alphabet.
9 See 1 Sam 9,2; Prov 20:29; Eccl 11:9.
11 See Eccl 11:9, 12:1
12 See Num 11:28
The feminine counterpart to *bachur* is the term *bethulah*, virgin. It refers to the, nubile, unmarried girl that did not have yet any (sexual) relationship with a man (see Lev 21:3; Num 31,18). In this respect are according to Lisowsky¹⁶ 50 occurrences of the singular and the plural *bethulim*. In twelve passages *bachur* and *bethulah* are mentioned together as a related pair of words¹⁷ referring to the young people.¹⁸ Metaphorically it is used as a personification of a nation, a city or a land like “virgin, daughter of Egypt” (Jer 46:11), “virgin, daughter of Sidon” (Isa 23:12), “virgin, daughter of Babylon” (Isa 47:1) but also “virgin, daughter of Zion” (Lam 2:13) or four times just “virgin Israel” (Jer 18:13).¹⁹ These expressions as well as the specification “who never has had intercourse”²⁰ as a specification added to the word *bethulah* suggest, that the emphasis of term is more on young, grown-up girl than on virgin, although these two usually go together. If a girl is not a virgin until her marriage, her lost virginity would be a physical proof of her unchastity. She would be considered to be guilty of committing harlotry in her father’s house.²¹

There is actually only one reference of the word *valad*, meaning child, in the Old Testament (Gen 11:30). The term seems to be derivate of *yeled* which will be discussed later.

In a more figurative way the word *zera* can refer to young people, although not exclusively. Usually *zera* means seed, seedtime in the botanical context (see Gen 1:11-12) and also concerning animals or humans it refers to the semen (see Lev 15:16). In this regard it often denotes offspring, descendant or ancestry. In 220 verses of the Old Testament (225 occurrences according to Lisowsky) the metaphorical meaning of this noun, as used for the first time in this sense in the *Protoevangelium* in Gen 3:15, is more

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¹⁵ See 2 Kgs 8:12; Isa 31:8; especially Jer 48:15.
¹⁶ Lisowsky, 297.
¹⁹ See also Jer 31:4.21 and Amos 5:2.
²⁰ Gen 24:16; Judg 21:12
²¹ Deut 22:21. In Deut 22:13-21 the legal case of a pretended virginity is discussed respectively a husband’s accusation, that a girl was not a virgin when he married her. If the assertion can be proven to be true the death penalty will be the consequence for the young woman.
prominent than the literal. There are however a few references where *zera* explicitly means child like in Lev 22:13 or in 1 Sam 1:11. In the Old Testament there are several clusters with the meaning descendants. There is the promise to Abraham that is repeated to the following patriarchs (Gen 12:7, 15:18, 24:7, 28:13; et al.), the “seed of Aaron” as the true priesthood (Exod 30:21; Num 17:5[16:40]; et al.), the royal line through David (2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:5; et al.) and there are references in the context of curses, blessings and promises that will include the descendants (Deut 28:46; 1 Kgs 2:33; Isa 44:3; et al.).

Similar to the term *ben* the prominent usage of *zera* to denote descendants stresses the awareness that the life, identity and future of further generations are always intrinsically tied to the “fathers” and rooted in their history. “The fates of an ancestor and his offspring constitute a single chain. The descendants bear the stamp of their father, both positive and negative, even—in fact especially—in their relationship to God. The sequence of generations, the notion of genealogy, is also projected into the future through *zera*’ and given importance.”

Eventually, according to a biblical understanding, all generations are conjoined by sharing the history of the same initial parentage.

Just one passage in the Old Testament has a reference to the word *choreph* (see Job 29:4) in its figurative meaning youth or maturity. According to Koehler and Baumgartner it means also early time and Gesenius gives an additional translation with winter respectively autumn and winter. The root *charaph* is twofold in its basic meaning. On one side it means actually winter but on the other side it means shame or disgrace. However, the reference to the season and thus to the agricultural cycle from which the metaphorical meaning youth is derived is interesting. Gesenius suggests that the verbal form refers to the picking of fruits in the autumn. That is the time when fruits are ripe for the picking. In this respect the idea of maturity, lusty and ready for action, reached in the time of youth would make sense. But Kutsch favors the idea of early time

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21 Ibid, 4:161-162.
24 Koehler and Baumgartner, 336.
25 Gesenius, 2:400.
since the beginning of the agricultural year was in biblical time in the autumn or winter. Thus, figuratively *choreph* is to be understood just as the early time of manhood.\(^{26}\)

A rather general term designating also the child or children is the Hebrew *taph*. Its range of meaning can include youth in a household but it is more connected to the idea of being dependent, weak and not able to fend oneself.\(^{27}\)

The word *yonek* is rather a univocal term for a little child\(^{28}\) but the Hebrew term *yalad* with its basic meaning to bear or to beget has several variations that can connote the young generation in general.\(^{29}\)

With almost 240 references the term *na‘ar* is a very important word in respect to the denotation of young people. Although it is an undisputable fact that the noun *na‘ar* and its derivations are human age designations mainly meaning boy, lad, young man or in some cases servant, there is still a debate about the actual root of *na‘ar*.\(^{30}\) Some suggest that the root *n’r* is a word that could be translated as to snarl, to growl, to bray or to cry. In the Semitic language context, however, this root refers exclusively to the sound of animals such as lions, donkeys or birds and there is just one text in the Old Testament with this meaning.\(^{31}\) Nevertheless, this root could be a reference to the fact that in puberty the (male) voice changes and produces strange sounds. The second


\(^{27}\) The term occurs 42 times in the Old Testament. Usually it is translated as (little) children, often in the sense of infants or toddlers (see Num 14:31; Deut 1:39). But its actual meaning is more connected to the idea of being dependent, weak and not able to fend oneself. In this respect *taph* can also refer to old men and women. In a nomadic setting *taph* denotes those that are not yet or not anymore able to march (Koehler and Baumgartner, 355). Therefore *taph* is also used to include all people from a household that are not specifically mentioned like in Ex 10:24 or 12:37 (C. Locher, “tap,” in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 3:372-373).

\(^{28}\) It is derived from the verb *yanak* to suck, to breast-feed. The *yonek* is therefore the suckling or nursling and explicitly describes the first stadium of childhood. In this sense there are ten references in the Old Testament (e.g. Num 11:12; Isa 11:8).

\(^{29}\) According to Lisowsky there are 89 references of the derivate *yeled* with its meaning boy or child (e.g. Gen 21:8.14-16; Eccl 4:13.15), whereas the feminine form *yaldah*, girl, has only three occurrences (Gen 34:4; Joel 4:3[3:8]; Zech 8:5). In a few passages, as Gen 4:23, *yeled* or as in 1 King 12:8.10.14 the plural form *yeladim* refers rather to a young man respectively to young men than to a boy child or boys. Only three references are to be found with the word *yalduth*, usually translated with childhood or youth (see Ps 110:3; Eccl 11:9.10). Another derivative noun is *yalduth* which means son, descendant, or it denotes the slave born in the household. It is just thirteen times mentioned in the Old Testament (e.g. Num 13:22.28; Gen 14:14).


\(^{31}\) Jer 51:38.
argumentation refers to another branch of meaning of the root n'\textit{r}. Here the basic meaning is to shake, to shake off or to shake oneself free. In the Old Testament this denotation is actually documented ten times.\textsuperscript{32} The suggestion is that \textit{na'ar} refers to the shaking off at birth and became thus the word for youth. However, some like Fuhs\textsuperscript{33} or Lisowsky\textsuperscript{34} suggest even that the root has a third basic meaning that is unknown.

That \textit{na'ar} is the main term for youth can also be seen by the fact that it became part of a stock phrase as an antonym to \textit{zaqen} (old, old man), which actually serves as it’s opposite (e.g. Gen 19:4; Josh 6:21). Although \textit{na'ar} is clearly denoting young people it can also designate a baby like the three-month old Moses (see Exod 2:6) or a small child (see Isa 7:6; 8:4). In general the term refers to someone still living under the protection of the father, under the same roof and not independently like Benjamin (see Gen 44:20.30-34) or the sons of Jesse (see 1 Sam 16:11). In this respect it can also been understood, that in some cases \textit{na'ar} means servant (but not slave) and thus a free man that enters by choice into a servile relationship (see 1 Sam 9:1.3) or it denotes people in military service (see 1 Sam 22:2). Besides the youthfulness and the particular connotation of vigor and strength, especially the wisdom literature associates \textit{na'ar} also with immaturity and dependence. A \textit{na'ar} is easily led astray and deluded (see Prov 7:22-23), needs training and discipline (see Prov 22:6.15). To have a \textit{na'ar} as king would be a curse (see Eccl 10:16). There are several texts that suggest an upper boundary for the age of \textit{na'ar}. However, they vary from 20 years (see Exod 30:14; Num 1:3.18; et al.) or 25 years (Num 8:24) to 30 years (Num 4:3.23; 1 Chr 23:3). The assignment remains rather vague.

The feminine \textit{na'arah} (61 times) usually designates a young female, single and marriageable (e.g Gen 24:16.26.55.57), and as it's male counterpart also female servants with a variety of positions and functions (e.g. Ruth 2:8.22).

The three abstract formations \textit{no'ar} (8 times) and \textit{ne'urim} (46 times) respectively \textit{ne'urot} (just one occurrence of the feminine form) denote without distinction the time of youth. Thus, these are the most specific terms for youth or the adolescence in the Old

\textsuperscript{32} e.g. Isa 33:9; Judg 16:20.
\textsuperscript{33} H. F. Fuhs, ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Lisowsky, 936.
Testament. In different contexts, however, “specific attributes such as young, inexperienced, immature, unmarried, or fresh, radiant, vigorous can shape the semantics of the text in question.”

The terms 'ul (2 times), 36 'olel (11 times) or 'olal (9 times) as well as 'awil (2 times) 38 have the root 'wl, which means to suckle (see Gen 33:13). They specifically designate a little child than a youth. 39

There are nine references with the word 'almah which is another term to denote a young, marriageable girl or woman. 40 The male expression 'elem then designates a young man and has only two references in the Old Testament. 41 There is also a relation to the rare term 'alumim (4 times) 42. Lisowsky 43 as well as Koehler/Baumgartner 44 translate it with “age of youth” the latter also as “youthful vigour”. The root of this word group is not clear.

One of the two references for the word tseirah in the Old Testament means youth (see Gen 43:33). The literal meaning is rather littleness or smallness since the root tsa 'ir is specifically a term of size or (in)significance. However, similar to the comparable word qaton or qatan (little, small, weak) it can figuratively also mean ‘young.’

**New Testament Terminology**

The broad spectrum of terms in the Old Testament to designate members of the emerging generation is only partially reflected in the New Testament. Besides the prominent term huios (379 times) that is, apart from its literal meaning “son”, often used figuratively, 45 there are just a few specific words referring to the young generation.

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35 H. F. Fuhs, ibid, 484.
36 Isa 49:15, 65:20
37 See 1 Sam 15:3, 22:19
38 Job 19:18, 21:11
39 Just in terms of their root the first three usually designate a newborn child, a suckling or an infant. In the two references in Job 'awli means rather boy. The nouns 'olel and 'olal are often associated with yonek (see above). Combined they are mostly used in portrayals of war and profound misery. The doubling “infants and sucklings” in such a context stresses the total eradication of a population or people (e.g. Lam 2:11). Although these two terms are semantically different, they do not really designate different age groups.
40 E.g. Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8.
41 1 Sam 17:56, 20:22.
42 Isa 54:4; Ps 89:46; Job 20:11, 33:25.
43 Lisowsky, 1070.
44 Koehler and Baumgartner, 707.
45 Especially when it is referring to the sonship of Jesus Christ.
The first word—by following the Greek alphabet—brephos, does also denote the first stage of life. In the classical Greek it can have the meaning “fruit of the body,” embryo, small child, infant or just young. In the New Testament it occurs according to Nestle-Aland (26th edition)\(^4\) eight times.\(^6\) Except in 1 Pet 2:2 it is in all references used literally meaning the not yet born as well as the new born baby or the small child.

There are two words, neanias and neaniskos that both can have the meaning youth. They are not very specific and the actual connotation lies more on the meaning young man. The term neanias has three references only in Acts\(^4\) and neaniskos occurs eleven times in the New Testament.\(^4\) The terms can be used interchangeable since in Acts 23 the nephew of Paul is once called neanias (v. 17) and twice neaniskos (vs. 18.22). Both can designate “a young man until about the age of forty years.”\(^5\)

In a more figuratively sense the Greek word neos refers to young people. Originally the term had a close association to the concept of time. Its basic meaning is “belonging to the present moment.”\(^5\) In a broader sense it means new, fresh or in reference to persons it has the connotation young.\(^5\) The noun neotes, however, more specifically means youth or child. It occurs 4 times.\(^5\) Interestingly, youth or child is here derived from the idea of being new or fresh. A further derivation is neoterikos which also means youth or youthful. The only reference of this term in the New Testament is found in 2 Tim 2:22. The apostle Paul connects in this passage the age of youth to evil desires (!) from which young Timothy should flee.

Another term is nepios. In its literal sense it refers to small children or infants. However, in the New Testament the noun nepios, denoting a child, is only used “to illustrate a situation or a certain behavior.”\(^5\) Especially in the Pauline literature this

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\(^4\) [Concordance to the Novum Testamentum Graece, 3rd ed. (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 293.](#)
\(^4\) [Acts 7:28, 20:9, 23:17.](#)
\(^4\) [See Matt 19:20.22; Mark 14:51, 16:5; Luke 7:14; 1 John 2:13.14.](#)
\(^5\) [There are 24 references of neos in the New Testament.](#)
\(^5\) [Mark 10:20; Luke 18:21; Acts 26:4; 1 Tim 4:12.](#)
comparison is rather negative. Thus, Paul creates a “tension between the ethical concept of childhood as something to be left behind and the theological view of childhood (sonship) as the supreme gift of the Spirit.” In the Gospels nepios occurs only three times. The fact that Jesus reveals himself to the nepios and manifests to them the greatness of God’s grace is figuratively referring to the core message of the Gospel.

The most important word group according to the frequency of references is pais with its derivations. The actual root of the word has the connotation of small, little. In referring to people it became a prominent word to denote children, boys and girls. The term pais with its twenty-four references has rather a broad range of meaning since it can refer in the New Testament to infants (Matt 2:16), growing children (Matt 17:18, 21:15), the twelve year old Jesus (Luke 2:43), or youth in general (Acts 20:12 cf. v.9). It can also refer to servants or slaves. Matthew as well as Luke use pais synonym with the word doulos (see Matt 8:6.8.13, and Luke 7:7 cf. vs. 2.3, or 15:26). Pais is also used as pais theou, servant of God, a special expression derived from the ancient cultic language. In close analogy to Isaiah 42 and 53 the New Testament exclusively uses pais (theou) as a reference to Jesus Christ, the Messiah and risen Lord. In the LXX pais quite often translates na’ar.

Closely related is the term paidion, a diminutive of pais. Its main emphasis is “little child” although it can have a similar range of meaning as pais and thus denote the new born child (see John 16:21; Matt 2:8.9.11.13-14.20-21), the growing child (see Matt 11:16, 14:21), the son or daughter (see Luke 11:7; John 4:49). Paidion is also used figuratively to denote undeveloped understanding (like nepios, see 1 Cor 14:20), believers (Heb 2:13), or as an affectionate address (see John 21:5; 1 John 2:18). With 52 occurrences paidion has more than twice as much reference in the New Testament than pais. In the LXX it often translates yeled or taph.

55 E.g. 1 Cor 3:1; Gal 4:1.3; Eph 4:14; Heb 5:13.
58 That is not rather surprising since a servant or a slave belonged in the Palestine context to the household. He could also be called “son of the household” and as such did not have to be a natural born son. See Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:5f.
To this word family belongs also paidarion, another diminutive of pais. It designates a male child or youth or a young slave. The only reference in the New Testament is in John 6:9.

A young woman that is mature but unmarried is often denoted with the word parthenos. In the New Testament it has fifteen references. The term means virgin but occasionally it refers just to a young woman of marriageable age as for instance in the parable of the ten parthenoi (Matt 25:1.7.11). In 1 Cor 7:25-38 we find six references of the term. Paul considers it to be better to remain a parthenos and thus remain unmarried ("because of the present crisis", v.26). This is also true for men. Similar to its Hebrew counterpart bethulah the accentuation lies more on being unmarried than on being "untouched." However, the context decides the emphasis. In Rev 14:4, where the term is used figuratively, it is actually the quality of the 144'000 to be "undefiled."

There are two more words that can refer to youth documented in the New Testament, tekon and its diminutive teknion. It seems obvious that they are closely connected. The root of these terms means to beget or to bear. The connotation is thus on the child from the viewpoint of origin or in relation to his parents. Teknon is the most prominent word to denote children or youth in the New Testament. It occurs 99 times and is the general term for the child of father and mother (e.g. Matt 7:11, 10:21). In the LXX it is the word most used to translate ben. Apart from the literal meaning its figurative use is frequent. It can be used to denote, in a Hebraistic phrase, a people or inhabitants of a city (see Matt 23:37; Luke 19:44). It can refer to a people with a specific quality (see Eph 5:8; 1 Pet 1:14), or used as an address of adults that are in a specific relation or connection to someone (see Matt 9:2; 1 Cor 4:14; John 8:39), and it is the term used to designate Christians as children of God (see Rom 8:16; Phil 2:15).

The derivative teknion occurs in the New Testament only in the plural and only in the writings of John. Literally it has the meaning little child but John uses it only in a figurative way either as an address of the disciples by Jesus (John 13:33) or as his address for the congregation (e.g. 1 John 2:1.12.28).
APPENDIX B

GOD INTERACTING WITH YOUTH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Joseph

Although spoiled by Jacobs preferential treatment and confronted with the hostility of his older brothers Joseph has been shaped by God to become a deliverer to his people. In Potiphar’s house Joseph displays a teenager (see Gen 37:2) who can overcome temptations and who refuses to defile his soul with Potiphar’s wife since he sees himself and his life as being responsible to God (Gen 39:9). God not only led Joseph to be the number two in the hierarchy of Egyptian ruler ship but used him as a providential instrument through whom to bring reconciliation and preservation (Gen 45:5).

Miriam

When the Hebrews prospered in the land of Egypt they were seen as a threat to the natives. Therefore the order was given to throw all male Hebrew babies into the Nile (Ex 1:22). After Moses’ birth his parents hid him for three month but then they placed him in a small vessel which they deposited by the river’s edge. It was his sister Miriam watching her baby brother from a distance to intelligently propose a Hebrew nurse, the own mother, to care for the child as the Pharaoh’s daughter discovered the baby and finally adopted it (Ex 2:4-10). God used a young girl to take care of the future of the Hebrew nation.

Samson

Samson’s birth had been announced by the angel of the Lord and he was set apart to God from birth (Judg 13:3-6). God is giving purpose to a child’s life since through him God will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines. While he grew up God blessed the boy consecrated to him and the Spirit started to move him (Judg 13:24-25). Although the ardor of youth led Samson astray and brought suffering upon him and others God finally prevails by leading to the intended goal (Judg 16:30).

1 See Num 26:59.
Samuel

In a similar way Samuel was set apart to God after his birth (1 Sam 1:11.24-28). The boy’s call demonstrates that someone’s young age does not hinder God’s leading interaction and appointment to spiritual service. Already as a boy Samuel was ministering before the Lord under Eli the priest (1 Sam 2:11.18; 3:1). Since he was wearing a linen ephod (1 Sam 2:18) the boy is even depicted “as a little priest.”2 It is emphasized that Samuel was continually growing and that he was pleasing to God (1 Sam 2:26) through all stages of his childhood. The actual call happened while Samuel is still denoted to be a na’ar (1 Sam 3:1). Although, as seen above, this term may designate a baby as well as a grown up adult the course of the narrative as well as the tradition of interpretation suggest that Samuel was called as a young teenager by a personal encounter with the Lord (1 Sam 3:4-14), or in the age of twelve as Buttrick suggests.3 This age of twelve would even suggest that God called the boy when he became a “son of the law.” Anyway, the biblical text following the calling narrative (1 Sam 3:19a) says that “the Lord was with Samuel as he grew up” and suggests that the young Samuel, though called to special service, was still going through some developmental stages and was not yet a grown up adult. Despite his youth he was blessed with wisdom and insight since the Lord “let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Sam 3:19b). Obviously, God called a kid to priestly service. However, it seems to be no unimportant detail that throughout his calling experience, service, and growing up Samuel had been mentored by Eli and thus by an older and more experienced spiritual adult.

David

From a western twenty-first century perspective it seems already remarkable that the thirty years old4 Saul had been selected to be the first Israelite king and not a more life experienced older and wise man, the call and age of his successor is even more notable. David was still a teenage boy when he was chosen by God and had been anointed to be the new king of Israel (1 Sam 16:1-13). He also was still a teenager when he fought against Goliath. At least he was too young to join the army. Instead, David

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was shepherding the flock of his father and doing errands to the older brothers in the battlefield (1 Sam 17:15), thus, playing "roles typically assigned to children." There are other hints indicating that David was but an adolescent by that time. David is decidedly not called to be a man but is always denoted as a "son of a man" (1 Sam 17:12.55.58). David identifies himself not with his name but by referring to his father (1 Sam 17:58). David was the youngest of eight sons and only his three oldest brothers served in the army of Saul (1 Sam 17:13-14). The earliest age to join the army was usually with twenty years. When David suggests fighting Goliath Saul reminds David that he is only a boy whereas Goliath has been a warrior since his youth (1 Sam 17:33). Also in Goliath’s eyes David is but a youth (1 Sam 17:42). David admits that he is inexperienced with military equipment and he is even not able to lift up Saul’s sword (1 Sam 17:38-40). It is an ironic and meaningful situation when Saul urges the boy to wear his own armor. The adult tries to impose his own means of service and fighting on the boy, his own concept of (spiritual) warfare, but all of this is too heavy for the youth and does not fit. David has to fight by his own terms and with the things he is familiar with. And typically for youth, he does everything with speed (see 1 Sam 17:17.22.48.51). Finally, God grants victory not by force of men nor specific means but by grace (see 1 Sam 17:47) even by using the faith and the zeal of a youth. Young people like David can do extraordinary things especially when they have been given opportunities and responsibilities that help them to make their own experiences with the Lord (1 Sam 17:34-37).

Kings of Judah – Joash and Josiah

The biblical books of Kings and Chronicles report of several Judean Kings coming to the throne in a rather youthful age. Actually, from the twenty Kings of Judah (starting with Rehoboam) fourteen kings were not older than twenty-five by the time of their ascension to the throne. Four of them have even been less than eighteen years old.

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4 As suggested by the Septuagint.
6 See Num 1:3, 26:2.4; 1 Chr 27:23; 2 Chr 25:5.
7 Interestingly, there is no direct biblical record of the ages of the Israelite kings of the North, neither regarding their age when they ascended to the throne nor regarding their age when they died.
However, although even in Judah the succession of kings and the age of the heir to the throne was usually not just the result of a specific divine call but rather has to be seen in the context of the retaining of the crown in the family dynasty, 

Nevertheless and especially seen from today’s perspective such youthful emperors are remarkable. The vast number of young kings document that it was not uncommon and thus accepted in these times to entrust high responsibilities and leadership to youth respectively young adults. 

Nevertheless, rather unusual was the ascension of children as Joash and Josiah to the throne.

When Joash became king with seven the story of a tragic regency of forty years took its course. However, it is said in 2 Kgs 12:2 that “Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him.” Obviously Joash was coached and spiritually mentored and as long as this relationship lasted Joash’s kingship was successful and blessed. However, it seems that despite the priestly mentorship Joash did not develop a strong and independent spiritual and political position since after Jehoiada died Joash fell for the manipulation of Judean officials who let him astray (see 2 Chr 24:17-18).

Differently than the story of Joash, the youngest appointed king of Judah, is the course of Josiah’s life and regency. The most profound reform of the Israelite cultus and worship of Yahweh as well as the renewal of the covenant mark his kingship. He was eight when he was called to be king. 

With fifteen, “while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David” (2 Chr 34:3a). It was even for the biblical writer remarkable that as a teenager Josiah had already developed his own spirituality and sincere piety. Josiah’s seeking of God and spiritual walk becomes manifest as he began

Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:18). 20 years: Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:2). 18 years: Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:8). 16 years: Uzziah (2 Kgs 15:2). 12 years: Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:1). 8 years: Josiah (2 Kgs 22:1). 7 years: Joash (2 Chr 24:1). 9 In this regard the strategy was to appoint a son of a king while his father was still alive and ruling. Such coregencies of father and son often lasted for a few years and consequently ended with the death of the father.

Young leaders are a general phenomenon in antiquity. For example, Alexander the Great became king of Macedon when he was twenty, but before that he was already leading military campaigns. With twenty five he had already conquered Egypt and the Persian Empire. See E. A. Judge, “Alexander,” in The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Merrill C. Tenney, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 1:97-98.

11 This implies that his father Amon who died twenty-three years old was fourteen when Josia was born (see 2 Kgs 21:19). Young fathership is also true for Josiah himself. When he died with thirty-eight his two
to purge and purify Judah and Jerusalem of pagan worship and idolatry at the age of about nineteen (2 Chr 34:3b-7). With about twenty-five Josiah commanded the restoration of “the temple of the Lord his God” (see 2Chr 34:8, my amplification) which also led to the discovery of the Book of the Law and the renewal of the covenant with Yahweh (see 2 Kgs 22:3-23:23; 2 Chr 34:14-35:19). The life of Josiah is evidence for the fact that the zeal and spirituality of a youth combined with the challenge of entrusted responsibility may foster not only progress but true reformation. Hardly any regency has been praised as that of Josiah (see 2 Kgs 23:25), a king who “lived up to the standard of piety passed on by David to his son Solomon.”

Daniel and His Friends

As youth Daniel and his three friends have been exiled into a foreign land but despite the experienced trauma they are examples of young people with steadfast faith and trust in God. By their lives they showed that their primal loyalty belonged to their Lord (see Dan 1:8, 3:16-18). Their faithfulness finally led to their promotions to be in charge of high official responsibilities. Daniel’s fidelity to God developed in young age continued and was not corrupted even by his status and wealth in Babylon since his perspective of live was oriented towards the restoration of the sanctuary and the city of God (Dan 6:20, 9:17-19).

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is one of the most remarkable prophets and characters of the Old Testament times. His ministry encompassed the last forty years of Judah’s existence, sixregnancies, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, and continued beyond in the Egyptian exile (see Jer 43:8-44:30). Considering the length of his ministry of at least sons Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim were already twenty-three respectively twenty-five years old (see 2 Kgs 23:31.36).


13 Despite Josiah’s reform the prophetess Huldah repeats words of judgment against Judah (2 Kgs 22:15-20) and though warned by a word of God, Josiah dies an ultimate death in a disastrous action against the Egypt pharaoh Neco (2 Chr 35:20-24). Thus, Josiah’s reign ends with Judah under Egyptian domination.

14 Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, and the governor Gedaliah.
about fifty years, it is very likely that Jeremiah was called to be a prophet (Jer 1:6), as Young suggests, “while still a youth, about twenty years of age.” In fact, when “the word of the Lord came to him” for the first time (Jer 1:2) Jeremiah himself reacts diffident and refers to his young age: “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child” (Jer 1:6). Again the rather unspecific term *na‘ar* occurs, but the manner of Jeremiah’s reaction as well as God’s encouraging reply (Jer 1:7-8) suggest the conclusion that Jeremiah actually referred to his young age rather than just to his inexperience. God obviously appointed and empowered a youth to be his prophet under a king who at that time was about twenty-four (Jer 1:2) of age. However, God did not appoint Jeremiah by chance but by providence. God knew Jeremiah before he was born yet he formed him, set him apart, and appointed him as prophet already in the mother’s womb (Jer 1:5). Hence, the biblical account suggests that Jeremiah’s true identity comes to light as he accepts and follows God’s call. Thus, a youth finds his destiny and purpose by detecting and deploying his God-given potential.

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APPENDIX C

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

Blessing Children and Belonging to the Kingdom

In Mark 10:13-16 an incident is reported where children had been brought to Jesus with the intention that he may touch and bless them.¹ Up to this passage the reader is already familiar with Mark’s common narrative pattern. In the previous chapters there have been already several reports of Jesus touching and healing people (including children) or people touching him.² But what seems to start as another healing story here finally turns out to be the “culmination” of Jesus’ ministry to children.³ In this pericope Jesus makes clear that children are “intended recipients of God’s kingdom and examples of entering it, which he demonstrates by hugging them, laying hands on them, and blessing them.”⁴

Different to previous passages the actual motivation of the people bringing the children to Jesus was not to get a healing touch for the little ones, there is actually no reference to any sickness, but rather to have Jesus bless them just as Matthew suggests with his reading “that he might lay his hands on them and pray” (Matt 19:13). A wish Jesus finally satisfies. Anyway, the first interesting thing here is the spontaneous reaction of the disciples. It seems that they are just acting in line with their culture when they greet the people bringing the children to Jesus with quite harsh rebuke (Mark 10:13). Judith Gundry argues that the disciples’ reaction could also be motivated by their assumption that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem in order to establish the Kingdom and that they will benefit by sharing in his reign. According to this assumption the rebuke would have been based on a now heightened expectation of the completion of Jesus’ mission. Thus, the disciples would want to avoid “any delays caused by people’s

¹ The incident is also reported by the other synoptic Gospels. See Matt 19:13-15 and Luke 18:15-17. Luke denotes the children brought to Jesus more specifically as brephe (infants) not like Mark and Matthew as paidia (children). Although Matthew and Luke generally rely on Mark’s account they have their own line of interpretation.
clamoring for Jesus’ attention or bringing others to Jesus—especially when these people were little children, who seemed relatively insignificant in the grand scheme of things."5 However, since children were on the lowest social level and even were not worth of a rabbi’s attention it seems more likely that the disciples just considered it to be inappropriate that Jesus should deal with children.

It is explicitly reported and therefore considerable that Jesus becomes indignant and angry over the disciples’ reaction. This is actually one of just two references in all the Gospels that explicitly speak about Jesus’ anger.6 Jesus’ strong reaction thus may imply “the seriousness of excluding children from the blessing of God.”7 Jesus’ anger about the rebuking of children in this incident does also indicate the seriousness of the following reaction and teaching. It begins with a double command in verse 14 to let the children come to Jesus and not to hinder them. This implies both the active invitation of children to the presence of Jesus as well as welcoming them when they are drawing near. Children belong to the presence of God and the presence of children does not at all undignify the “holy place.”

In fact, surrounded by children Jesus even declares that the kingdom of God belongs to such a kind of people (toioutos). He literally means “children” since the use of toioutos generally denotes a class of which the one mentioned in the context is an example and therefore “this text cannot simply refer to those adults who are childlike to the exclusion of actual young children being brought to Jesus.”8 It can, however, refer to both. Thus, children are as such proper recipients of the Kingdom of God since they fulfill the conditions to enter it by both, status and quality.

Children are the lowest, weakest and most vulnerable members of the society and in any respect as dependent and in need as the poor, the hungry, and the suffering that Jesus calls blessed in the Beatitudes (see Matt 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23). They cannot but unconditionally receive the Kingdom. The gift of the Kingdom is not bound to fulfilling

5 Gundry, 167.
6 The other is found in Mark too, see 3:5.
the Law since children are according to pharisaic teaching neither obligated to fulfill it nor capable of doing so.9

Having announced that the Reign of God belongs to children in this pericope Jesus even takes a step further and now declares children as models of entering the Kingdom of God. “Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” (Mark 10:15; cf. Luke 18:17). This saying is “so counterintuitive in Jesus’ setting”10 or rather countercultural that he attaches his own authority to it by introducing his statement with the formula “amen, I say to you.”

Luke seems already to suggest an interpretation of Jesus’ statement about the condition for entering the kingdom by immediately attaching this teaching incident to the previous parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector that concludes with the logion: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14b). Although the idea of humbling himself11 is very basic and certainly present in Jesus’ saying here, there is more to that or it has to be explored in different terms since it is primarily the parable in Luke 18:9-13 that defines Jesus’ conclusion in verse 14.

Now the teaching of Jesus to receive the Kingdom of God like a little child is tied to the actual little children that are with him. Children were not only the least and lowest but also lawless. Based on the common formula of rabbinic Einlaßsprüche (entrance dictums) about the conditions to enter the kingdom of God12 this “paradoxical provocation” Willi Egger argues that “Jesus makes use of the ‘requirements for entrance’ common to the Judaism of his day, in which certain rewards were granted for certain

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10 Witherington, 280.
11 This aspect is much more in the forefront in the pericope that is initiated by the disciples’ struggle about greatness in the kingdom (see below).
acts,... but where the mention of a law-fulfilling act was expected, Jesus names instead a 'child'—i.e., a person who was not able to fulfill the law."\textsuperscript{13}

Strikingly the children do not even come to Jesus on their own rather they are brought. Thus, the Kingdom of God "belongs to them without respect to their subjective attitude or activity."\textsuperscript{14} Children, who can stake no claim neither by their knowledge and observance of the Torah nor by virtue of their status, wealth, and power, receive what only God is providing. In this light it seems no surprise that all three synoptics let the pericope about the rich ruler (or young man) follow this incident with the children (see Matt 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-27).

Jesus is, by no means, romanticizing children or childhood as a time of innocence like some rabies argued\textsuperscript{15} neither is he just favoring any particular childlike quality as requirement for entering the Kingdom such as modesty, trustfulness, simplicity, or the absence of (sexual) desire or striving for power. Not what the child should be is in focus but what the child actually is.\textsuperscript{16} Not specific childish characteristics rather "the child’s littleness, immaturity and need of assistance, though commonly disparaged, keep the way open for the fatherly love of God."\textsuperscript{17}

As if he wants to underline this statement Jesus in verse 16 takes the children in his arms, hugs and tenderly blesses them. Overturning the assumptions of the twelve disciples again the pericope ends in sharp contrast to their initial rebuking of the children. God chooses to give the Kingdom of God to children, the needy and dependent, and now they participate in its blessing. With this unique act of blessing in the synoptic tradition,\textsuperscript{18} Jesus’ ministry to children comes “to a culmination.”\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{14}] Gundry, 152.
  \item[\textsuperscript{15}] See Grundmann, 277.
  \item[\textsuperscript{16}] The history of interpretation of Mark 10:13-16 par as well as Mark 9:33-37 par shows that often interpreters read their understanding of an ideal child into the text. Ulrich Luz provides a brief but condensed compilation of such perceptions throughout the history of interpretation. See Ulrich Luz, \textit{Das Evangelium nach Matthäus}, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 1, bk. 3 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1997), 13-14.
  \item[\textsuperscript{17}] Oepke, 649.
  \item[\textsuperscript{18}] See Wiefel, 335.
  \item[\textsuperscript{19}] Gundry, 154.
\end{itemize}
Becoming like a Child and Greatness in the Kingdom

There is another occasion, again reported by all three synoptics (see Matt 18:1-6; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48), where Jesus teaches a central lesson by referring to children. The initial incident is the disciples' discussion about greatness in the Kingdom of God. Jesus reacts by taking a small child and putting it in the midst of the disciples to demonstrate how to be great in God's Kingdom. Jesus even equates their receiving a little child into their care in his name with receiving himself. It is noteworthy that "Jesus identifies with the young child, vulnerable and low in status; hospitality for the child is extended at the same time to Jesus. And God identifies with the child in the same way." Grundmann points out that this attitude of Jesus is without any parallel in the history of religions.

The last and lowest social status of children in ancient times sets again the cultural background of Jesus teaching. The disciples' striving for power is put into contrast with serving the least, the child, and aspiring for a position in the Kingdom means "to change and become like little children" (Matt 18:3). Again Jesus' teaching is in this pericope introduced with an "amen, I say to you." Once more Jesus is heavily stressing the importance of his spiritual lesson based on a child and authenticates the validity of his teaching. In reference to the Kingdom of God, and not just concerning the question about greatness in the Kingdom but concerning the question about entering the Kingdom (what the disciples did not ask) adults have to change not children. Jesus did not invite the children to come to his presence in order to introduce them into the adult realm but to award them with what is already theirs, namely God's Kingdom. In this respect

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20 Matthew does not refer to an actual struggle of the disciples over this issue as Mark does and in Matt 18:1 the disciples ask Jesus. On the other hand Mark pictures Jesus asking the disciples about the issue of their discussion.
21 All of the synoptics use paidion to denote the child. Most probably it was thus a small child. However, the fact that Jesus did not take the child from the arm of its mother and that all report that Jesus had it stand in their midst indicates that it was not an infant unable to walk but rather a small child below the age of puberty (which corresponds with the larger umbrella of this term).
22 Mark 9:36 specifies that Jesus took the child in his arms, hugging it.
24 Grundmann, 263.
“becoming like a child” is another or even opposite way of being an adult. It’s the way of life of a disciple, a child of God.

In the context of the disciples’ question about greatness childlikeness put into contrast by Jesus is merely defined as humility.26 But the Greek tapeinoo in Matt 18:4 does not just mean to have a humble attitude but to voluntarily accept the status of lowliness and live by it.27 In the light of similar logia of Jesus (see Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11, 18:14) the statement of Jesus here can be seen as a core teaching.28 With the child as a model, greatness and leadership in the Christian context is marked by a humbleness that does not “exert power over vulnerable children but act in humility toward them, knowing that hospitality shown to a young child is shown to Jesus as well.”29

Matt 18:5 includes a first concretion of what accepting lowliness means, namely the call to the solidarity with children and to love them,30 as well as the promise that whoever receives a child receives Jesus himself. Mark even specifies that by receiving Jesus one receives “the one who sent me” (see Mark 9:37). Mark also reports that Jesus’ call to receive a child is accompanied by hugging the child in the midst of the disciples (see Mark 9:36). The parallelism in Jesus’ teaching between “hugging” and “receiving” is supported by Jesus’ acting. Thus, so Gundry, “not only love and acceptance (in contrast to denigration) of little children but attending to their needs in a more comprehensive sense is suggested.”31

To conclude as some interpreters do that Jesus refers solely to children that are unprovided ("unversorgt") like orphans or exposed would be a constriction of the actual incident as well as of the intention of Jesus’ teaching.32 Jesus does not just make a call for more social responsibility regarding the care for children. Such an allusion, however, is

26 So Gundry-Volf, 41-42.
28 Wiefel, 320.
29 John T. Carroll, 130.
30 Lutz, 16.
31 Gundry, 156. Gundry further argues that Jesus’ hug can be understood as an “adoptive embrace” and an assumption of a parental role. See Gundry, 156-157.
32 See Pesch, 107. See also Stegemann, 129.
part of this tenet about the Kingdom of God but that the child Jesus took seems to have not been accompanied by his mother does not mean that the child had none. The fact that a child was easily at hand when Jesus was reacting to the disciples’ discussion about greatness may indicate that in the ancient near eastern context children were generally playing in the streets, not always under parental observance, and that they followed strangers or interesting people coming to town (Jesus was already known in Capernaum) even into a house.

Concerning the receiving of Jesus respectively God through a child Strange argues that Jesus is referring to the Jewish law of agency. A man’s agent is an authorized representative or proxy and as such he is to be received and treated like the person whom he represents.33 “In their treatment of children, the disciples turn out to be dealing, not (as they might think) with the least important members of society, but with their master’s chosen representatives.”34 This thought finds an analogy in Matt 25:31-46 were at the last day it will be revealed that any service given to the needy, poor and weak has been given to Christ himself. In this context serving children may be seen as “the highest calling.”35

The Little Ones and Spiritual Childship

Unlike Mark (see Mark 9:38-41) Matthew in his gospel does not use the story of a man who practices exorcism in the name of Jesus as a bridge to Jesus’ harsh warning of offending or misleading “little ones” respectively causing them to sin (see Mark 9:42; Matt 18:6). Matthew seems to have another purpose of teaching by continuing immediately from “receiving a child” in Jesus name (Matt 18:5) to “causing a little one to sin.” Although Matthew (as Mark in 9:42) uses the Greek term mikroi in verse 6 he seems to put it directly in parallel to the paidion in verse 5. Thus the “becoming like a child” and “receiving a child” set the tone for the further discourse about the mikroi who believe in Jesus (see Matt 18:6.10.14). It is generally accepted that the term mikroi in Matthew is a specific denotation of disciples or followers of Christ (see Matt 10:42,

33 As an Old Testament reference of such a custom may serve Gen 24. Abraham’s servant was sent to deal on his master’s behalf with the betrothal of Isaac. As Abraham’s agent all the respect, hospitality and honor shown to the servant is shown to the master himself.
34 Strange, 54-55. Similar Grundmann, 263.
35 Gundry, 160.
25:40). Nevertheless, being little is in accordance and closely related with “becoming like a child” and thus a specific characteristic of a disciple of Jesus. The term mikroi in verse 6 also echoes verse 4 “whoever humbles himself like this child” and stands in sharp contrast to the Greek meizon “the greatest” (comparative degree of megas) that was the initial concern of the disciples. However, Matthew’s narrative arrangement here suggests that the little child is still standing beside Jesus and in the midst of the disciples since Jesus seamlessly continues his teaching. If so, with the child as initial point and the physical presence of the little child, the term mikroi in Matthew 18 cannot be viewed apart from the child. Therefore and in the light of Jesus’ teaching about actual children, his identification with them, and their prominent place in regard to the Kingdom of God the child as such cannot be excluded when Jesus condemns severely all who cause “one of these little ones” to stumble (Matt 18:6). When Jesus warns everyone not to despise “one of these little ones,” since angels in the immediate presence of the Father in heaven are representing them, the child as well as the adult that “becomes like a child” are to take into account (Matt 18:10). And the parable of the lost sheep applies to children too since it is not in the will of the Father that “one of these little ones” will be lost (Matt 18:14). This sequence of teaching also implies that Jesus took children with absolute seriousness. What happens to a child, personally and regarding his or her faith, is of special concern of Jesus (v. 5), the angels (v. 10) and the Father (v. 14). Matthew thus puts the welcoming and receiving of a child in the right perspective.

Finally, the whole sequence in Matthew 18:1-14 implies the literal child as well as being a child in a metaphorical sense. The human striving for greatness is disrupted by Jesus taking a child and putting it in the midst of the disciples arguing that it has the qualities to enter the Kingdom of God adults have to regain. In this respect Jesus’ teaching is rather surprising.

36 See Wiefel, 320.
38 See J. White, “‘He Placed a Little Child in the Midst’: Jesus, the Kingdom, and Children,” in The Child in the Bible, 367.
39 In the classical Greek mikroi can denote children or the childhood too and in this sense it is also used in rabbinic writings. See Michel, 651-652.
40 „Das ist das Neue, das in der Verkündigung Jesu liegt: er überwindet das jüdisch-pharisäische, aber auch das menschliche Streben nach ‘Größe’, und er besiegt die Anfechtung, die in der Kleinzahl liegt. Er sieht das Kleinsein vor Gott und das Zeugen dieses Kleinseins, ja des Sichselbst-Erniedrigen, Sichselbst-
Besides the actual child standing in the midst of the teaching situation Jesus pictures himself as a child by referring to “my Father in heaven” in verse 10 and in verse 14 he pictures the disciples as children since now he refers to “your Father in heaven.” Here Jesus’ central motive of the intimate parent-child relationship between God and those believing in him, apparent already in the call to become like a child, shines through. Bringing these two aspects together Joachim Jeremias makes a strong point when he argues that becoming like a child means learning to say “abba” since this is the most intimate and childlike address of God Jesus himself uniquely used and taught. Because of its uniqueness as address of God and since it is a reference to childlike language abba is according to Jeremias ipsissima vox Jesu (the very voice of Jesus). Only children are able to say abba and childship (Kindschaft) is the most central attribute of the Reign of God. Only those able to call God “abba” have him as father, are his children and are thus members of his Kingdom.

Although Jesus’ teaching of childlikeness for entering the Kingdom of God is unique, provocative, and countercultural in Judaism and the whole Greco-Roman context it is actually not without parallels in the Old Testament. Several references depict Israel as an infant or a child, small and helpless when God elected and redeemed the people (e.g. Deut 7:7-8; Hos 11:1-4); or even as an exposed newborn girl, untended, unwanted, and abhorrent to everyone except the Lord who chooses to enter into a covenant with it and to bless it (see Ezek 16:3-14). By referring to the text in Ezekiel 16 Gundry concludes:

Jesus’ teaching his disciples that they must receive the kingdom of God “as a little child” in order to enter it (while unparalleled in a strict sense) is strikingly reminiscent of the prophetic critique of Israel as having forgotten her former state of radical dependence on God as an exposed newborn girl and needing to occupy that same state in the new covenant that God will establish with her. It is perhaps legitimate to conclude that Jesus brings this Old Testament prophetic tradition to a climax by asserting that only those who stand in the least palatable, most shameful and unenviable position of dependence on God, namely, that of a little child, will enter the kingdom of God—and therefore anyone can enter. Though unappealing (in

Niedrigmachen als den Weg an, das Himmelreich zu erwerben und im neuen Aeon ‚groß‘ zu sein.” Michel, 657.

a first-century CE Mediterranean context), the requirement of childlikeness is thus ultimately liberating.42

However, despite such Old Testament imagery as prophetic background and the childship (Kindschaft) as central attribute for all members of God’s Kingdom Jesus is in no way just metaphorically speaking about children or using them merely as illustrations of weakness, frailty or lack of power in all the reported incidents. What Jesus says about children he actually means. He identifies himself with the child and he did not metaphorically hug and bless the children. White correctly argues that “it would be most unlike Jesus to take a real child as a sign without being genuinely interested in and committed to the well-being of that particular child. Jesus does not use people as teaching illustrations: they may become that, but his primary motivation is love and compassion for the individual concerned.”43

Through his teachings and his actions Jesus gave particular significance and value to children. The Gospels report of many people who have an encounter with Jesus, including poor, beggars, unclean, outcasts, marginalized, women, and Gentiles but never does Jesus freely and deliberately choose one of these as a reference or sign of God’s Kingdom by placing them in the midst of his disciples—rather it is a child. Jesus’ ministry to children in the Gospels “culminates not only in his declaring them explicitly to be heirs to and beneficiaries of God’s reign that has dawned through Jesus, but also in his assuming a parental role and blessing them with eschatological salvation as well as saving them from sickness and death in this life.”44

Jesus Exalted by Children

Taking all of the previous teachings of Jesus regarding children into account it seems no surprise that children and not the religious upper class exalt Jesus as the true King of Israel. While everyone are stunned or even shocked after Jesus powerfully cleansed the Temple and healed the blind and the lame it is the exultation of children that break the awkward silence in Matthew 21:15. While the “Hosanna” of the crowd during

42 Gundry, 172.
43 Keith J. White, 368. See also Strange, 56.
44 Ibid, 158.
Jesus' triumphal entry (see Matt 21: 9) to Jerusalem on that day fell silent and faded away, the children (paidas) continue to exalt the Son of David.

After the cleansing of the Temple through Jesus the wise men, the high priests and scribes, become indignant over the children's shouting (but according to Matthew not about the cleansing itself!) and therefore confront Jesus why he has no problem to accept such childish excitement (see Matt 21:16). Jesus points them to Psalm 8:2 “from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise”\footnote{According to Matthew Jesus cites the LXX where the plural nepion is used.} and thus affirms that children who allegedly know nothing can have true insight and praise God. Strikingly, the Messiah is proclaimed in the Temple by children who are seen to be “ignorant and untrained in religious matters and the least likely to play this role.”\footnote{Gundry-Volf, 47.} It is in the physical centre of God's Kingdom on earth that “liminal children,”\footnote{Keith J. White, 372.} actually only children\footnote{One might argue that the blind and the lame that Jesus healed in the Temple (although not mentioned) are shouting in accord with the children.} and literal children, recognize and praise the true King. Somehow this seems to be an echo of Jesus' praise of the nepios in Matthew 11:25 (see also Luke 10:21): “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”\footnote{Of course in the antithesis to the wise nepios as a term to denote children can be translated just as ignorant. However, as shown before, no other group of people at that time represented the ignorant better than the children. The nepioi here reflect in a metaphorical way the poor in spirit, the meek, and needy for which the child stands as primus inter pares. See Ulrich Luz, \textit{Das Evangelium nach Matthäus}, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 1, bk. 2 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1990), 206.} The high priests and scribes that confronted Jesus must have been quite surprised about Jesus' answer. To learn that children, perceived as ignorant and worthless in ancient society, can speak truly about Jesus and have divinely revealed insight may have been quite a serious blow to them. Also by taking this into account the mikroi in Matthew 18 that are specified as those “who believe in me” (Matt 18:6) can indeed include children. Often it is argued that the characteristic of believing is an indication that children are not in view in Matthew 18:6-14. However, this incident of Jesus accepting and approving the praising children in the Temple again underlines the deep countercultural approach and opposed attitude of Jesus regarding the child.
APPENDIX D

WERE THE DISCIPLES YOUTH?

Although the New Testament does not specify the actual ages of the disciples there are many indications that most of them have been called into discipleship by Jesus in a relatively youthful age. From the socio-cultural perspective it even seems very likely that several disciples have been adolescents. In the Jewish culture at the time of Jesus the formal education of boys usually ended with the age of thirteen. By that time the Jewish boy had finished the study of the Torah and emerged into adulthood by taking up the 'yoke of the Torah'. Following the trade of their fathers young teenagers then continued to work at home respectively “in the workshop of their parents.” It is therefore no surprise that Jesus calls his first disciples, Simon and Andrew and especially James and John while they were working as fisherman in the profession of their father (see Mark 1:19). In the Jewish society marriage for a boy was expected to happen around the age of eighteen. Therefore, Simon, by all means, could have had a mother-in-law and still be not much older than about twenty (see Mark 1:30). On the other hand, the fact that many of the disciples seemed to be unmarried at the time of their calling may also indicate a relatively young age. Further, the specific relationship between a rabbi and his mathetes or tamid was well rooted in the Jewish society. Usually a rabbi allowed students to study at his feet when they were around the age of fifteen (see above). Although Jesus did not just copy the traditional praxis of Jewish ‘higher education’ he did follow its formal pattern. The fact that the call into discipleship which implied the leaving of the families trade did not cause enmity between the sons and their father indicates that the rabbi-

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1 See Strange, 16-17.
2 Balla, 56.
3 See Strange 17-18.
4 Jesus did not simply indicate himself as a rabbi to his disciples but as the kyrios. He is not the head of their school but the living Lord. His mathetes were not just to be understood as the potential transmitter of Jewish teaching and imitators of the rabbi’s life but to be the witness to the Messiah. Jesus also chose ordinary people whereas usually only youth from the upper society had access to this kind of education relationship with a rabbi and they had to ask a rabbi to be accepted into his circle of pupils. See
6 See Balla, 131.
disciple relationship was not only culturally established and thus well accepted but it was even more highly valued and an honor for the disciples as well as for their parents. As students of the law the mathetes have been highly regarded in the society.\(^7\) Thus, it is very likely that Jesus called his first disciples in their late teenage age years. Anyway, Matthew might have been somewhat older since he was already an established tax-collector. However, as we will see later, it was absolutely possible for young men in their mid-twenties to be in public office. A youthful age of many of the disciples would also explain the length of time they lived after Jesus' death. Following the traditional conviction that John, the son of Zebedee, is the author of the book of Revelation\(^8\) and that it had been written during the reign of Domitian which ended in 96 AD John was possibly hardly older than 20 years when he was called into discipleship by Jesus.

A rather youthful age of the disciples could also be supported by the foolish struggles among some of the Twelve regarding greatness as well as the parental intervention pleading for a special position of their sons in the coming kingdom (see Matth 20:20-21). Also Peter's often unbalanced and temperamental behavior could not only refer to his peculiar personality but also to his adolescence. Many other behaviors of the disciples could fit with the age of adolescence.

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\(^7\) See Bromiley, 558. This fact may also be a further reason why the disciples immediately followed Jesus and that their parents were willing to let it happen.

\(^8\) For arguments regarding the traditional view see Nichol, ed. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7:715-723.
APPENDIX E

PERCEPTION OF CHILDHOOD IN ANCIENT TIMES

Despite the sketchy state of ancient sources concerning childhood and youth there is enough evidence to draw a "general picture of the place which adults assigned to children in their—adult—picture of the social world."¹

Children – An Economic Necessity

Although children had been deeply desired and to bear a child was considered to be a blessing in the ancient Near East—as it is reflected in the stories of the Bible²—their actual social status remained marginal and occupied a low rung on the social ladder.³ According to Stegemann the social status of children in ancient times is quite comparable with the status of slaves.⁴ It is therefore not by chance that several terms that denote children or youth in ancient languages could also refer to slaves.⁵ In the Ancient Near East, in fact, children and slaves are often mentioned together in a depreciatory way and "we may note that, in both Greece and Rome, 'child' was the standard way of addressing a slave, another individual who could not share in the community of adult citizens."⁶

The value of a child in ancient times was seen from an instrumental view that holds childhood as valuable "for the sake of what it will later become" rather than to understand it as having its own value, "irrespective of later developments."⁷ That childhood is noteworthy only because it precedes adult life is quite obvious in a statement of Cicero: "The thing [childhood] itself cannot be praised, only its potential."⁸

In the ancient cultures, and especially in the agrarian context, children are seen to secure the socio-economic survival of the family in regard to their future contribution as adults. "Grown children would not only assume their productive roles within the socio-

¹ Wiedemann, 3.
² Sarai (Gen 16:1-3), Rachel (Gen 30:22-23), Hannah (1 Sam 1), Elisabeth (Luke 1:6-7.25)
³ Gundry-Volf, 32.
⁴ Stegemann, 123.
⁵ For references see section "Biblical Terminology."
⁶ Wiedemann, 22.
economic and political systems but also, closer to home, support their parents in old age and attend to their burial."

Although there are differences in respect of wealth, social status, environment, a large number of children was generally aimed since it is believed that the rate of infant mortality was high. There are some approximate estimates on this subject. Wiedemann concludes that “it is enough of an insight into the ancient world if we note that where life expectancy lies between 20 and 25 years, any parent must expect there to be only a fifty-fifty chance that a particular child will survive to the age of 10, and therefore a less than one-in-two chance that he or she will survive to become an adult.”

Children that survived and reached adulthood had the duty to provide for the parents in old age and for their decease. It was the common understanding that children had “to pay back a ‘dept’ owed to their parents for their own very existence and upbringing.” Violent treatment of parents as well as disrespectful behavior by grown up children could be punished and even lead to a death penalty. That children honor the parents by strict obedience was a common expectation in the ancient Near East. The fifth commandment (see Exod 20:12) did not have a unique standing.

**Children – The Possession of the Paterfamilias**

In the Old Testament (Deut 21:18-21) the case of a rebellious son, brought up by a father, had to be investigated by the city elders. If the accusation of the father had been found to be true the death sentence had to be carried out. However, what seems cruel in the first sight is rather an improvement of general customs. This legislation did actually protect children from fatherly arbitrariness. After all, in ancient times “a father could deal with his children as he wished.” The ancient family was very much dominated by the father and children as well as all other family members were under his authority and considered to be his property.

At Rome, the father’s authority was legalized as the *patria potestas*. It included the authority over all family property as well as the power of live and death. It was thus

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9 John T. Carroll, 122.
10 Wiedemann, 16.
11 Balla, 25.
culturally approved that a father could even execute an adult son. The father of the Roman household, the *paterfamilias*, had the authority over the children (even adult children) until his death. In the Greek context, however, a boy that reached majority with about sixteen was freed from paternal wardship. The strongest aspect of a father’s right of life and death over his children is according to Dixon his right to expose a newborn child.

**Exposure, Abortion, and Abuse of Children**

Although, “by the first century AD, Roman fathers no longer had the legal right... to put their children to death” it was still possible to expose unwanted babies. The exposure of children was common in many ancient societies and early in history. However, due to the many sources the exposure of children was definitely “socially accepted and widespread from the time of Alexander the Great.” Usually an exposure of a child happened in the first week after birth since in the Roman Empire it was a widespread custom to officially welcome a newborn child with a ceremony called *dies lustricus* on the eight day after birth for a girl or the ninth day for a boy and to give him or her the name. This ceremony marked the acceptance of the child by the family.

Girls happened to be more in danger of exposure than boys. In a letter to his wife a husband in Egypt writes: “If (Appollonarion?) bears offspring, it is a male let it be, if a female expose it.” Despite the fact, that mostly poverty was the reason for a family respectively a father to take this step there are “instances where even wealthy Romans

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14 Eyben, 412.
15 Ibid., 19:399.
16 Dixon, 122.
17 Strange, 7.
18 Bakke, 29.
20 Although in the Old Testament, especially in the patriarchal time, the name is usually given to a child by birth, Judaism seems to have adopted this practice by the New Testament times. In Luke 2:21 the naming of Jesus happens on the eighth day with circumcision.
21 Family in ancient times refers to the societal unit dwelling in the same household which includes husband, wife, and their unmarried descendants as well as slaves and other persons.
23 Other potential victims were handicapped or extramarital children. See Bakke, 30-31.
exposed their children."\textsuperscript{24} Exposed children—frequently left on rubbish tips or dung heaps\textsuperscript{25}—could be taken by any passers-by and raised as slaves or as free. However, abandoned children that did not die or had been rescued by someone, usually, ended up as slaves, sex toys, prostitutes, or gladiators.\textsuperscript{26} Laws against infanticide and exposure of children were introduced in the fourth century AD\textsuperscript{27} but remained a common praxis up to the sixth century AD.\textsuperscript{28}

Also the phenomenon of abortion was universally known in antiquity. Due to a general loose moral life abortion often was a means to conceal infidelity. However, Bakke argues that abortion was not only practiced to avoid public shame (because of infidelity) but that upper-class women did also abort since a child or rather pregnancy would be inconvenient or “because they feared that pregnancy and birth would have a negative effect on the shape of their bodies.”\textsuperscript{29} In the lower class among the many poor families abortion was rather a means to cope with the economical challenge to have several but not too many children to feed and bring up.

Sexual abuse of children was another common phenomenon in the Greco-Roman society. Suzanne Dixon points to the fact that young children “were routinely... sexually exploited.”\textsuperscript{30} Usually, the sexual relationship between children and men which especially includes pederasty were “societally accepted” and thus not considered to be abuse.\textsuperscript{31} In the Greek society a sexual relationships between children—girls as well as boys—and men were even more accepted since freeborn men were even allowed to have sexual activities with freeborn children. The Romans were more hesitant regarding sexual practices when both parties were freeborn. The Greek practice of pederasty between a freeborn man and a freeborn boy was considered to be disgraceful, although, it was also widespread in the empire.\textsuperscript{32} Sexual activities with slave-born children were not seen to be a problem at all. Also “child prostitution was a universal phenomenon.”\textsuperscript{33} Generally,

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Bakke, 51.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Strange, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 22.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Under Emperor Valentinian in 374 AD legislation made \textit{expositio} a crime. See Bakke, 33.
\item \textsuperscript{28} See Dixon, 122.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Bakke, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Dixon, 131.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Bakke, 44-45.
\item \textsuperscript{32} See Bakke, 43.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 44.
\end{itemize}

273
sexual relationships in all variations were seen to be normal as long as they do reflect the hierarchical pattern of power relationship, which means that the freeborn man “was the active, dominating, and penetrating partner.”

Children had to “play” the passive role. What other choice did they have?

At this point it must be noticed that due to a different estimation of human life and the appreciation of children as a gift of God infanticide, sexual abuse, and the exposure of children was not practiced in the Jewish as well as in the later Christian social context.

Based on the Law of Moses (Exod 21:22-25) even the widespread execution of abortion in ancient times was generally, not accepted and considered to be a pagan custom. According to a biblical understanding God is at work in the moulding of the foetus (see Job 31:15; Ps 139:13) and abortion would be a form of murder. Nevertheless, Judaism knew a harsh treatment of children too.

**Human Animals in Need of Discipline**

Beating of children was common in the whole ancient Near East. Since children lack reason they are in philosophical tradition commonly grouped or compared with animals. The Roman stoic philosopher Seneca (4 BC – 65 AD) could actually denote a child as a “human animal.” Therefore, “the educative task was seen as being similar to training an animal.”

Children were in need for heavy discipline in the form of beating because they are wild creatures and this is the only language they could understand. In ancient times it was not expected that reason, the *logos*, actually develops before puberty. The (first) growing of the beard was believed as evidence that now reason grows too. Childhood is the training ground for the real life in adulthood. It was commonly believed that “only by strenuous educative effort, and only then with normal gifts and the right technique,

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34 Ibid., 42.
35 The only notion of exposition in the Bible is found in a powerful allegory of the unfaithful Jerusalem that had been exposed by birth, thrown in an open field, and was lucky to be found by God (Ezek 16:4-14).
36 Bakke, 26-28. (p. 27).
37 Bakke, 21. See also Strange, pp. 6.9.37.
38 See Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 137.
39 Strange, 9.
40 “Mit dem Bartwuchs kommt auch der Verstand.” Emiel Eybden, „Jugend,“ in RAC, 397.
can something be made of the raw material.”\textsuperscript{41} The “raw material” means the child. Regarding disciplining children Oepke concludes that in antiquity “there is no sense of the limitation of the educator, no regard for the developing personality, no profound love for the child, even in the later period.”\textsuperscript{42} If instruction by means of words is not considered to be successful it is not surprising that physical force seemed to be an appropriate educative mean to discipline children. As Wiedemann points out “the Latin word for teaching, disciplina, also has the standard meaning of ‘punishment’.”\textsuperscript{43}

In this respect the ancient Jewish society was hardly different. When Paul speaks about the painful discipline by the fathers in order to compare it with the way God is disciplining his children through hardship, he could refer to a common experience (see Heb 12:7-11). The collected counsels in Solomon’s Proverbs include several passages concerning a harsh treatment of children (see Prov 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14), and they reflect indeed the wisdom of ancient time. It would be artificial to just spiritualize these passages in order to avoid the fact of physical force in biblical education.\textsuperscript{44}

**Parental Affection and Cultic Functions**

However, there is a flip side to the rather negative view of children and youth as well as the harsh and indifferent attitude in regard to the youngest generation. It would be a misconception to conclude that young people and especially children did not experience love and affection from parents and society. Despite the strong dichotomy of childhood and adulthood in the whole ancient Near East in biblical times and despite the fact “that childhood in itself as a phase of life possessed no worth”\textsuperscript{45} since it was considered to be a stage of incomplete existence, the young did experience empathy in daily life. In fact, parental love was ever present.\textsuperscript{46} However, although it was seen to be the ideal that a mother should be closely involved with the child in the first years of his life many children had more contact and spent more time with other adults than with their

\textsuperscript{41} Oepke, 642.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 5:643.
\textsuperscript{43} Wiedemann, 28.
\textsuperscript{46} See Bakke, 54.
mothers and especially with their fathers. Even among the lower social class in the Greco-Roman context it was custom to have the children raised and cared for by wet nurses. The practical upbringing and basic education was often assigned to a slave, the *paidagogos* who had the task to attend to the child, oversee his conduct, and take the child to school.48

The Old Testament has a vivid record of parent affection and in Isa 49:15 the prophet poses the rhetorical question: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?” The original positive estimation of a child in an earlier rather tribal and agrarian context did not vanish in later ancient centuries although in the classical periods of Greece and Rome childhood faded more into the background. Broadly speaking a similar move is also reflected in Scriptures. Whereas in the patriarchal period and especially in the context of the covenantal promise to Abraham (Gen 12:2-3, 15:4-5) the child is more in focus, it is of less interest when Israel became a nation and the Jewish society settled and developed. A new interest in childhood and even a romanticization of the child-parent relationship arose with Hellenism.49 Wiedemann connects this change of attitude toward children to the *Pax Romana* in the first four centuries AD.50 The security and wealth of the Roman world-state especially in urban regions shifted the common way of life and the people became more concerned about amusement, entertainment and enjoying arts. Henceforward such a new interest became apparent not only in literature children became also subjects of the arts51 and were used for more often used for amusement and entertainment.52

There is also evidence that in the Greco-Roman context children were present and even played a role in cultic ceremonies, domestic worships, and public festivals.53 There were several possibilities for children to be actively involved in cultic rituals. Boys for

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47 See Bakke, 35-37. When children grew older mothers and fathers got more involved with their children regarding disciplining, teaching and decision making.
48 Paul refers to such a *peadagogos* in Gal 3:24-25 what indicates that in the Jewish society people were familiar with that kind of childcare.
50 Wiedemann, 3.
52 See Oepke, 641.
53 See Bakke, 48-49.
instance have been assisting some priests in the sacrifices. Cultic equipments in worship should be handled by a child since children were sexually pure. The various cultic functions assigned to children were thus rather related to the idea that the child is sexually inactive (as original sources point out) than to the idea that children were closer to the gods because of their marginal status in society (as Wiedemann points out).

**Childhood and Schooling**

It was commonly held in the Roman Empire that by the age of seven "a new phase" in the life of a child began and the time has come that a child has to be introduced into adult activities. As the old privileges of citizenship gradually faded "the acquisition of artes became the crucial step towards acceptance as an adult." With artes any kind of skills can be in view like handcrafts, technical skills, trading or social skills. But for free-born children the acquisition of literally skills became "most important." Schooling the ars should help children develop reason. For long the "ideal teacher" was seen in the father.

In the ancient Near East the household was the proper place for education and the preparation for adulthood. The responsibility for teaching children lay with the father. Generally, this applies for the Jewish father as well. Usually a boy would follow the trade of the father as it happens to be the case with Jesus himself (Mark 6:3). Thus, the primal task of the father's education was to teach his male child to do what he is doing. "Children who were reared must have been viewed in part as an investment in the future." This 'future' began for most of the children very early in their lives. Their labor would be of use on the farm, in the family's trade, or in any other form in order to contribute to the income and economical survival as soon they were more or less physically able. Of course, there was no such thing as a critical reflection on child

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54 See Wiedemann, 181.
55 See Bakke, 50-51.
56 See Rawson, 141.
57 Wiedemann, 157.
58 Ibid, 153.
59 Ibid, 156.
labor.\textsuperscript{61} It was only the privilege of the upper class to actually learn a profession or "gentlemanly skills."\textsuperscript{62}

However, in order to make the child competent at manipulating the \textit{ars}, beginning with letters, then literature, and more advanced rhetoric,\textsuperscript{63} teachers have been employed, often Greek "slaves or freedmen,"\textsuperscript{64} and schools established. The schooling of children out of home is actually an invention of the Greeks which the Roman as well as the Jewish society adopted.\textsuperscript{65} The option to send the children for a few hours to school has been welcomed by the Greek father since spending "too much time with his children, away from the 'proper' companionship of other men, risked ridicule."\textsuperscript{66}

The level of education available for a child, however, varied according to the social status of the parents, the financial means and the context of location (urban or countryside). In fact, a formal education in a school played in the Roman society "a comparatively subsidiary role"\textsuperscript{67} and was again rather a privilege of the wealthier. There is hardly any record about a formal education of girl's. In fact, according to Wiedemann there are even "no reminiscences of how girls were prepared in childhood to accept their subservient role as wives."\textsuperscript{68} Basically girls had to learn to manage the household, to marry soon and finally become a mother. "Marriage was assumed to be what made a girl's childhood meaningful."\textsuperscript{69}

Education of the young generation in the ancient Jewish society has its unique standing. Here too, the father has the primal role in education. From the earliest time of the Jewish people fathers had been entrusted with the task to teach their children in the ways of the Lord, the Law, and to induct them into the worship and traditions of the people (see Deut 4:9-10, 6:7.21, 11:19, 31:12-13; Josh 4:6-7; Ps 78:4). The Jewish self-conception of being the covenant people led to a careful education and upbringing of children. Since the initial covenant promise to Abraham included having countless

\textsuperscript{61} See Wiedemann, 153.
\textsuperscript{62} Dixon., 117.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 167.
\textsuperscript{64} Strange, 25.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Strange, 25.
\textsuperscript{67} Wiedemann, 143.
\textsuperscript{68} Wiedemann, 148.
\textsuperscript{69} Wiedemann, 149.
descendants (see Gen 13:16) children were a vital part of that covenant. Also in this context it can be understood why having many children is a sign of God’s favour (e.g. Gen 16:10, 17:2.4-5.20; Exod 1:7). Another especialness of growing up in Judaism, at least for males, is the fact that a baby boy had been circumcised on the eight day after birth (see Exod 12:48). Circumcision, thus, is an initial act of entrance into the community of the covenant. The (male) child grew up with a physical sign of belonging.

Due to the destruction of the Temple and the experience of the exile there happens to be “a shift of emphasis from the cultus towards the knowledge and practice of the Torah.”70 This affected also the educational system of the Jewish society and finally led to the establishment of schools. Based on the institution of the synagogue Judaism established its own distinctive pattern of schooling, although it was influenced by the Greeks too. First, in order to ensure that children who have no father get to know the Torah and learn to live by it, teachers have been appointed in Jerusalem for youth of about sixteen years.71 Rabbinic tradition ascribes the first founding of schools to Simeon ben Shetah around 100 BC.72 However, the problem was that these youth apparently had no father to ensure that the boy actually attends. Finally it was the High Priest Joshua ben Gamala who brought an important reform in 64 AD by the directive “that in every province and in every town teachers should be set up to whom children should be brought at the age of six or seven.”73 The school provided male children a new standing in the Jewish society. Females remained excluded since learning the Torah was a male privilege.74 To start the education of children in the age of seven was thus already the common praxis in ancient times. The care of the Ancient World for the education of children—although in some regions only partially, but increasingly in Hellenism—is a further evidence for a positive attitude towards the young generation.

70 Oepke, 647.
72 Strange, 14.
73 Ibid. Drazin comments that ben Gamala’s reform marks “the first instance in recorded history that we find an institution of universal and compulsory elementary education established” (p. 46).
74 Oepke, 646.
APPENDIX F

YOUTH IN ANCIENT TIMES

Ancient near eastern societies did see childhood and adulthood as two different entities of human life. But is there something in between? Is there an immediate change from childhood to adulthood? Was there any specific perception of youth in Antiquity? Dixon says that the Roman Empire society “did distinguish between children and adults and between the different stages of childhood and youth.” Nevertheless, such a differentiation was rather vague and inconsistent. The same applies to the Greece and Jewish perception of youth.

Youth in Greece

From a philosophical point of view the Greeks first established a categorization of the ages. The Athenian statesman Solon who lived around 600 BC seems to be the first who divided life into stages. There are, so Solon, ten ages of seven years. Of course, such a division was rather based on arithmetic and his affinity to the number seven than on a careful study of human development. However, Solon’s division was very influential not only because the play with the number seven was appealing. In his commentary on creation the Hellenistic Jewish Philosopher Philo refers in the first century BC, six hundred years later, to Solon’s division since it corresponds with the importance of the number 7 in creation.

“The perfecting power of the number 7 is also shown by the stages of men’s growth, measured from infancy to old age in the following manner: during the first period of seven years the growth of the teeth begins; during the second the capacity for emitting seed; in the third the growing of the beard; and in the fourth increase of strength; in the fifth again ripeness for marriage; in the sixth the understanding reaches its blossom; in the seventh progressive improvement and development of mind and reason; in the eighth the perfecting of both these; during the ninth forbearance and gentleness emerge, owing to the more complete taming of the passions; during the tenth comes the desirable end of life…”

1 Dixon, 107.
It is remarkable that according to this statement human development had been considered to be a lifelong process. It develops, for those who were lucky enough to go through all stages, until the “desirable end of life”. As sign of puberty serves the ability to ejaculate. It happens to the end of the second stage which is around 14 years. In the third stage from 15 to 21 the growth of the beard is characteristic, followed by the forth stage from 22 to 28 when the young men reaches the peak of his strength. The proper age for marriage and beget children for a man is reached with the fifth stage from 29 to 36. Only after that stage reason is actually developed.

The Greek physician Hippocrates who lived around 400 BC cut the ten stages of Solon down to seven stages but still playing with seven years for the stages. The seven stages of man are, infancy, childhood, boyhood, youth, manhood, middle age, and old age. Another attempt to divide life into stages was the analogy with the four seasons. However, in the actual social life these philosophical divisions did not play an important role. Since puberty with its physical changes was an objective incident in the life of a child it was generally considered to be the end of childhood and marked the beginning of adulthood. But that did not mean that a youth were seen as an adult rather substandard. Puberty, in Greek called hebe generally was ascribed to the age of fourteen for a boy and thirteen for a girl. But decisive was not the age but the signs of puberty. As in Solon’s third stage the growing of the beard was such a sign. There are actually references to an old’hair ritual, where the first beard hairs had been offered to a god. Another puberty rite was the sacrifice of a certain toy of the child to a god. Such rituals would have served as a rite de passage from childhood to adulthood. But public recognition of the end of childhood happened at least in two stages. First, with the age of sixteen (later the beard offering was also appointed to this age) the boy was admitted to the phratria, the kinfolk. Then, with eighteen the youth reached officially the hebe, which designated majority, by getting his name written in the list of citizens. The boy now was an ephebos but not yet a

3 According to Philo Hippocrates makes a semantic differentiation by denoting the stages with the terms paidi,on, pai,f, meira,kion, neani,skoj, avnh,r, presbu,thj, ge,rvn. Philo, De Opificio Mundi, 105.

4 Childhood goes with springtime, youth with summer, manhood with autumn and old age with winter. See Eyben, 397.

5 Eyben, 392 and 398-399

real adult. Aristotle reports that the time of *ephebe* lasted at least two years and that these years had been designated to military training and sentry.\(^7\) The time of *ephebe* was some kind of a transitional period. The young man did not have to pay taxes and had curtailed civil rights. In classical Greek mentors of at least forty years of age have been commissioned for each *ephebe* “to supervise” the young man and serve as “disciplinary officer.”\(^8\) Aristotle further reports that “when the two years are up, they now are members of the general body of citizens,”\(^9\) which was with twenty years of age. However, since a young man under thirty was still considered to be unreasonable a young man did not have access to any public office or political responsibility.\(^10\)

It was possible for a boy to marry after puberty, which was with about sixteen, but as Solon already suggested, a man is ripe for marriage in the fifth stage, hence in his early thirties. Fully in line with this is Plato who suggested at least an age of thirty to thirty-five for a man.\(^11\) This thinking applies at least for the wealthier part of the people. Women, whether rich or poor, were expected to marry around sixteen to eighteen. One can imagine a married couple of the Greek middle class or high society as usually having quite a difference of age.

**Youth in Rome**

The Roman Scholar Varro who lived in the first century BC made the taxonomy of age cohorts based on the number five, five stages of fifteen years. He assigned boyhood (*pueritia*) to the age from birth to fifteen, followed by adolescence (*adulescentia*) from fifteen to thirty, and youth (*juventus*) from thirty to forty-five.\(^12\) 13 Probably, the context for designating youth until the age of forty-five was the military since in that age one became the status of a *seniores*.\(^13\) With seven generally infancy ended and the child was ready for education and eligible for betrothal. A legal marriage

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\(^7\) Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, 42,3-5.
\(^8\) Ibid., 42,2. Over these officer a marshal had been elected, who serves as a general supervisor and two athletic trainers to teach basic combat technique. So the context for the mentoring is rather military.
\(^9\) Ibid., 42,5
\(^10\) Eyben, 401.
\(^11\) Ibid.
\(^12\) Rawson, Children and Childhood in Roman Italy, 136.
\(^13\) Augusto Fraschetti, “Roman Youth”, in A History of Young People in the West – Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage, 62.
was not possible under the age of puberty. According to Varro fifteen seems to be the age of puberty. However, for the decision whether puberty was reached the opinion of the parents was decisive, at least in the earlier times of the Empire. In the later time of the Roman Empire the age of puberty was marked with twelve for girls and fourteen for boys but still needed to be verified by an actual inspection of the body.

For a boy the end of childhood with puberty was connected with an important civic act. In a special ceremony he could set aside the tunic of children (toga preatexta) and take on the dress of a man (toga virilis). Thus, at least in the earlier Empire the young man has reached majority age, had the right to vote and could marry. With seventeen a young man was ready for military service and his basic training for battle (tirocinium). Since the time of Augustus full maturity in Rome was not reached until the age of twenty-five when a man was allowed to hold a public office. However, a young man remained under the patria potestas, the authority of the father, until the father died.

Girls were expected to marry soon after puberty. There was no comparable rite de passage to mark the end of puberty and the beginning of youth. The significant transition for a female was rather from virginity to marriage.

There is reference that young people organized themselves, at least those from middle and upper class with an age of fifteen to twenty, in some kind of youth clubs, the collegia iuvenum similar as the Greek neoi societies where its members were between about twenty and thirty. Eyben calls both of them youth movements that flourished between the fourth century BC and third century AD. The Roman collegia reached in the time of Augustus its zenith and spread through the whole rather Latin speaking Empire. These collegia iuvenum knew own ceremonies and their main interest was in

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15 Eyben, 409.
16 Rawson, 142.
17 Corbett, 51.
18 For a detailed description of the ceremony see Fraschetti, 65-69 and Rawson, 142-144.
19 Eyben, 410.
21 Eyben, 411-412.
22 See Rawson, 145.
23 Ibid., 400-401. See also Fraschetti, 78-82.
But juvenile organizations had also the objectives “to introduce young men... to the political life of the city... and, at the same time, to exert some control over an age cohort that occasionally seemed ‘dangerous,’ by channelling its energy into appropriate offices.” Such organizations, however, were rather aristocratic despite the fact that they were open to rich freedmen and the urban bourgeoisie too.

Contrary to his Roman contemporaries the stoic philosopher Seneca, who lived in the time of Jesus, doubted the common view that the youth of his time is worse than the youth in former times. He designated youth to be the best time of life because young people’s mind is still corrigible and capable of being influenced for the good. Nevertheless, most Romans rather scoffed at young people. Eyben lists several common characteristics the Romans attributed to youth such as: imprudence, levity, temerity, confusion, fickleness, suggestibility, impulsiveness, intemperance, extravagance, addiction to pleasure, and being libidinous. The Greeks know similar attributes but generally viewed youth more positively.

Romans as well as the Greeks also noticed the juvenile affinity to meet with peers. However, Eyben collected reports of complaints about young people that they like to gather in obscure taverns and gambling dens, attend private orgies, and stumble through the street in noisy processions, in the night they frighten late homecomers and even assault them. There are records of juvenile gangs and vandalism conducted in drunkenness. Strikingly, based on similar experiences ancient civilization complaint about youth in a similar way as in general today’s modern western society.

Youth in Judaism

The Old Testament attributes similar characteristics to youths as it is reflected in the Greco-Roman societies. On the other hand, the Old Testament also praises the time of youth and calls young people to enjoy their youth (Eccl 11:9-10). But who is a youth?
Early Judaism respectively the Old Testament times do not know of specific stages of age. As already noted earlier, the Old Testament terminology shows a wide range of terms to designate children and youth but there seems to be no interest to be more specific concerning a differentiation of young people. Anyway, one of the few texts that could be viewed as a classification of age groups is Lev 27:1-8. Here, the people of Israel is divided into four age categories, one month to five years of age, five to twenty years, twenty to sixty, and sixty until death. The reason for such a categorization seems to be tax collection. It is interesting to note that the amount of money does not only vary between the age groups but within the age group also among the gender. For males the tax is higher, since apparently, they are of higher value.

There are few and rather incidental records about puberty respectively signs of puberty and they relate to girls (see Gen 31:35; Lev 15:19; Ezek 16:7). Signs of puberty among boys are hardly mentioned. Obviously they did not play the same important role as in the Greco-Roman cultures. With circumcision a male child was already part of the covenant people and thus a citizen of Israel.

According to Lev 27 it could be argued that a young man passed from youth to adulthood in the age of twenty. A specific rite de passage, however, is not known. Nevertheless the age of twenty was important. Num 14:29 and 32:11 seem to indicate that with the age of twenty young people reached full moral responsibility and the knowledge of good and evil (see Deut 1:39). With twenty a young man was ready to go to war (see Num 1:3, 26:2.4; 1 Chr 27:23; 2 Chr 25:5). The tax for atonement is raised for all those that are twenty or older and the census taker should therefore count the people from twenty (Exod 30:12-14). Levites generally began their priestly work with the age of twenty, which lasted until the age of fifty (1 Chr. 23:24.27; 2 Chr 31:17; Ezra 3:8).

The age of thirty seems to have a meaning too. With thirty Joseph entered the service at the side of pharaoh, the king of Egypt (Gen 41:45-46). David was thirty when he became king of Israel (2 Sam 5:4) and Jesus was according to Luke about thirty when he began his public ministry. In the rabbinic tradition the age of thirty in fact was

31 However, in other references the age for the start of the work at the Sanctuary is thirty (Num 4:3.23.30; 1 Chr 23:3) or twenty-five (Num 8:24-25). It may be that t
considered to be the peak of manpower\textsuperscript{32} and quite similar to the Romans a man reached with this age full maturity. With thirty it was possible to be called a rabbi.

A more differentiated and reflected picture of young people and youth is drawn in the post-exilic area, actually with the emergence of the rabbis and the school system with its task of religious education. Blomenkamp cites rabbinic sources that say that a Jewish boy began the study of the Torah with five years by learning the letters and reading it, with ten starts the reading of the Mishna, with thirteen he learns to understand the Torah and live by it, with fifteen he learns the Talmud, and with 18 he should marry, and with 20 the boy was ready to pursue a vocation.\textsuperscript{33} During the school reform of High Priest Joshua ben Gamala (see above) the age of six had been constituted to start school. With the age of thirteen the boy reached the completion of the education. If he did not respectively could not follow a rabbi with about fifteen and continue his education he should learn a trade.

Rabbinic Judaism also fixed the age of puberty. Girls reached puberty with twelve years plus one day and boys with thirteen plus one day. Religiously as well as socially they reached maturity. Nevertheless, similar to Roman law not only the age per se was decisive but also actual signs of puberty. "The attainment of the age of maturity did not automatically render one an adult, since the physical characteristics of puberty were also necessary in order to establish adulthood."\textsuperscript{34} At least two genital hairs must be visible. If there are none, the young people had to wait until twenty or even thirty-five in order to be recognized as being mature.\textsuperscript{35} A girl's maturity was established when she gave birth to a child. With attaining the age of maturity, the youth were obliged to follow the \textit{halacha}. They were responsible "in ritual, civil, and criminal matters, and were held punishable by the courts," although, heavenly punishment "was not forthcoming for sins committed before the age of 20."\textsuperscript{36} Actually, total legal capacity in the Jewish society was not reached until the age of twenty.\textsuperscript{37} Since references that the status of obligation

\textsuperscript{32} Eyben, 426.
\textsuperscript{35} Eyben, 427; Rothkoff, 696.
\textsuperscript{36} Rothkoff, 696.
\textsuperscript{37} Eyben, 428.
for boys was reached at the age of thirteen and that it marks a turning point in a young boy's life. Going back to the second century BC, one can assume that it had been celebrated in some way despite the fact that the actual bar mitzvah, as the Jewish rite de passage for a boy of thirteen, is not mentioned before the fifteenth century AD. However, there is evidence that “in Jerusalem during the Second Temple, it was customary for the sages to bless a child who had succeeded in completing his first fast day at 12 or 13.” That the only report of Jesus' youth, given in Luke 2:41-52, focuses on an incident in his thirteenth year may be more than coincidental.

Summary

Bringing the described socio-cultural aspect together, the status of children in ancient times within Judaism as well as in the wider Greco-Roman context can be characterized by social ambivalence and ambiguity.

From Antiquity up to the dawn of modernity children were basically considered as an economical necessity to secure the socio-economic survival of the family and as an investment to the future. The value of a child in ancient societies was seen from an instrumental viewpoint that valued a child for his potential to become an adult, a real human being, rather than for what he or she is. Children were standing on the same social level as slaves and thus at the very fringe of society. In fact, they were the property of the paterfamilias and especially in the Greco-Roman context under the absolute authority of the father, the patria potestas. Fathers had the right to kill their children—also as grown-ups—if they misbehave. Infanticide and exposing children were except for Judaism quite common practices in ancient times. Such practices underline the low social status and the vulnerability of children and indicate that the actual life of a child did not count a lot. In fact, childhood in itself possessed no worth and was described as an incomplete human existence.

A harsh treatment of children was common and supported by the belief that a child is a human animal that lacks reason. Such a not-yet-human perception of little children could persist for centuries and was still alive at the end of the 19th century. The main educative means was beating. Reason develops with puberty and is fostered by

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39 Ibid.
teaching the *ars*. Despite the fact that children learned for life at home, parents did not spend much time with children. Often wet nurses and slaves respectively *paidagogoi* were entrusted to care for and attend to the child. The life script of a child was determined by the family (status, profession, etc.). Girls were born to marry.

Despite the ancient contempt for childhood parental love and affection were not absent and the child-parent relationship even got romanticized in Hellenistic times although this new interest in children was accompanied by a bitter aftertaste (children entertaining adults). However, reticence regarding emotional involvement with the child and parental affection was also due to high childhood mortality.

In the ancient Near East the household was the proper place for education and the preparation for adulthood. The general responsibility for teaching children lay with the father. The need for a more formal and constricted public education (out of home) in the *ars* emerges first in the Greek urban society and eventually was adopted by the Roman as well as the Jewish society. Nevertheless, a formal education in a school played in the Greco-Roman society rather a subsidiary role and was a privilege of the wealthier. Besides, there is hardly any record about a formal education of girl’s.

Although girls too did not have access to formal education in Israel the Jewish society, based on the institution of the synagogue, established its own distinctive pattern of schooling and was actually the first in the ancient Near East to have a public school that lived up to its name. Since the Jewish self-conception of being the covenant people and the traumatic experience of the Babylonian captivity finally led to a careful education and upbringing of children in the schools and thus was open for all boys between about seven to twelve years of age. However, to start the education of children in the age of seven became actually the common praxis in ancient times. The emergence of public schools fostered in general a growing awareness of children in ancient societies.
APPENDIX G

THE PERCEPTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND THE MIDDLE AGE

A trend that already emerges in the writings of the New Testament (apart from the synoptics) further evolves in the course of time and the growing Christian community. The significance of children apparent in Jesus teachings and acting, his countercultural approach and attitude slowly fade into the background and common perceptions and theological sophistry come to the fore.

The Times of the Apostolic Fathers and the Patristic Period

The post-New Testament period is marked by emphasizing the parental duty to teach and instruct children in the faith. Since Christian children grew up in a pagan setting and attended public school it was important that parents do not neglect their responsibility to raise their children “in the fear of God.” Clement of Rome directly addresses the men in Corinth in his first epistle around 96 AD: “Let us instruct our young men in the lesson of the fear of God. Let us guide our women toward that which is good... Let our children be partakers of the instruction which is in Christ.” Quite similar Polykarp of Smyrna (ca. 69-155 AD) wrote to the men at Philippi in a list of moral instructions that they have to teach their wives “to walk in the faith” and “to train their children in the training of the fear of God.” These statements reflect the common hierarchical family order with the father as paterfamilias who is also in charge to instruct morally both woman and child. That patristic writer stress obedience to the father not just motivated by Christian or biblical arguments rather it corresponds with the cultural context of the patria potestas and the sociological concept of honor and shame. The most important quality a man can have is honor. Honor is either ascribed according to ones

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1 See Strange, 79-81. “We might expect the early Christians to try to protect their young people by providing some alternative form of education which would keep them free from the temptations and snares of the pagan world in which they lived. They had, after all, the example of the Jewish synagogue schools. But, rather surprisingly, the Christians did not take that course for several centuries.” Strange, 80.

status, power and wealth (by birth or family connections) or honor is acquired by deeds and achievements the society recognizes as respectable and virtuous.\(^4\) Rearing obedient and chaste children is one important field for a father to gain honor or if the opposite is true (including if the child breaks with the faith of the father) to be publicly ashamed.\(^5\)

Concerning the instruction of children in the fear of the Lord the father as well as the mother should not hesitate to execute corporal punishment. In the Didache or Teaching of the Apostles (early second century) parents are advised with a command: "Thou shalt not withhold thy hand from thy son or from thy daughter, but from their youth thou shalt teach them the fear of God."\(^6\) This command seems to be quite prominent in the early Christian community since it is stated too in the same wording in a list of commands in the letter of Barnabas.\(^7\) Beating children was still considered to be an effective means in education as well as in the context of Christian formation. However, there have been sporadic voices that call fathers rather to hold back with corporal punishment. The Syric Didascalia for example (ca. 250 AD) urges fathers not to spare "to rebuke and correct and teach" their children but—in an analogy to the Proverbs—not with the literal rod rather with the spiritual rod which is the Word of God. "Therefore teach your sons the word of the Lord, and punish them with stripes, and bring them into subjection from their youth by your word of religion."\(^8\)

Although generally "heavy-handed regimes" were experienced the Christian child had greater protection from the danger of infanticide.\(^9\) Like the Jews the Christians too condemned abortion and the practice of exposure based on their theology of creation. The Didache orders Christians not to "murder a child by abortion nor kill them when

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\(^5\) Malina explains: "When you lay claim to a certain status as embodied by your authority and in your gender role, you are claiming honor. For example, a father in a family (gender role, status on the ladder of society) commands his children to do something, and they obey (authority), as God (the gods) intended: they treat him honorably. Other people seeing this would acknowledge that he is an honorable father. But should this father command and his children disobey, the children would dishonor him, and the father's peers would ridicule him, thereby acknowledging his lack of honor as a father." Ibid, 30-31.
Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165 AD) devoted a whole chapter to this issue and reminds his readers: “But as for us, we have been taught that to expose newly-born children is the part of wicked men.”\footnote{Strange, 78.} The fact that early Christian writings deal with that topic and exhort Christians to refuse such customs reveals that killing unborn and born children was still quite common. Since God is forming a child in the mother’s womb a child is a complete human being and not as commonly believed some kind of human animal.

However, in many other respects the patristic perceptions of childhood and youth were not very different from their contemporaries. Apart from the concern for Christian parenting with its duty to instruct children in the fear of the Lord and the later discussions about original sin (see below), we hear not much about the younger child as such.

About the older child respectively the time of puberty some reflections are made. Puberty was generally expected to happen at the age of 14.\footnote{Eyben, 434-435.} Similar to the Greek perceptions early Christians too believed that with puberty reason comes to life in a youth. Clemens of Alexandria (150-215 AD) shares the common view that the growing of the beard is an outward sign for the growing of reason.\footnote{Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Paedagogus III}, 18:2. Cited in Eyben, 433.} Tertullian (ca. 160-220 AD) too believed that “the puberty of the soul coincides with that of the body” in the age of 14 years and with that the youth gains the knowledge of good and evil. In an interesting analogy to the Fall of Man Tertullian argues that puberty drives the youth out “of the paradise of innocence and chastity”\footnote{Tertullian, \textit{A Treatise on the Soul}, 38. Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian10.html (accessed April 17, 2009).} he used to live in during childhood. As a consequence of this logic it was further believed that with puberty in the age of 14 the basic choice between good and evil is made and full moral responsibility is reached.\footnote{As seen above Jews saw that happen in the age of 20. See Eyben, 422 and 434.}

In early Christianity the general perception of the youth was rather negative. The adolescent is threatened and entrained by all sorts of dangerous stimuli and fervours, or as Paul already put it, by “the evil desires of youth.” Clement of Alexandria for example
calls youth “the burning season of life” and therefore he urges his fellow Christians that “we must, as far as possible, try to quench the impulses of youth.” Eyben states that patristic teachings sometimes draw a dark picture of youth by collecting its bad attributes. Some of the most prominent characteristics attributed to the age of youth by early Christian writers are such as unreasonableness, impetuosity, intemperance, lack of self-restraint, indiscipline, fickleness, easily get astray, or metaphors of youth like “a blazing fire,” a storm-tossed sea,” or “an untamed horse.” Augustine for example (354-430 AD) compares the devil with a youth. He comments on Eccl 10:16 that Salomon “has called the devil a youth, because of the folly and pride, and rashness and unruliness, and other vices which are wont to abound at that age.” Apart from the physical changes and the awakening of sexuality things like too much leisure time, money, bad company, and a lax upbringing are to blame for youthful misbehavior.

Although one should spare the literal rod and make frequent use of the spiritual rod, God’s Word, the Didascalia in the same paragraph as cited above advices parents to let youth in their dangerous age “do nothing without your counsel, lest they go with those of their own age and meet together and carouse; for in this way they learn mischief, and are caught and fall into fornication.” If their youth follow the path of sin “parents themselves will be accountable before God for the judgement of their souls.” Therefore it would be a good parental strategy to “be careful to take wives for them, and have them married when their time is come, lest in their early age by the ardour of youth they commit fornication like the heathen, and you have to render an account to the Lord God in the day of judgement.” Both Strange as well as Eyben confirm that the advice to early arrange a marriage for boys (even against their will) and not as usual just for girls in order to avoid temptations and keep the sex drive on pure track was quite common in early Christianity.

19 See Eyben, 439.
20 Didascalia, ibid.
21 See Strange, 79, and Eyben, 435.
One of the most prominent representatives of social control, early marriage and careful upbringing is John Chrysostom (347-407), priest in Antioch and bishop of Constantinople. Sensitized by his ministry in great urban areas and his observance of the growing hedonistic culture—even among well-off Christians—his special concerns are the solidarity of the human community, the church, and “the need for socialization of the young into the church.” Parents are central in all of this since the church-family will function properly only if they take seriously their role in upbringing. Chrysostom sees parents as artists fashioning their children like statues with great precision. “Like the creators of statues do you [parents] give all your leisure to fashioning these wondrous statues for God.” Parents who put their own needs before their children’s needs and neglect the care of their children’s soul “are even worse than those who kill their children” and “the greatest sin of all and the absolute height of wickedness is to neglect one’s children.” Since, according to Chrysostom, the family itself has to be seen as an ecclesial entity parents have an ecclesial office and a soteriological obligation for the care and nurture of their offspring. Parents are the most important role models for children. Whether a child inherits the Kingdom of God relies to a great extend on the parents. Chrysostom thus believes that parents play a salvific role and similar to the teaching of the Didascalia he holds parents responsible and accountable before God for the fate of their children. Jerome (347-420 AD) agrees that parent’s salvation depends on how their children live but he instead admits that an adult child is at a certain time in life alone responsible for his choices and deeds. “While the son is a child and thinks as a child and until he comes to years of discretion to choose between the two roads to which the letter of Pythagoras points, his parents are responsible for his actions whether these be good or

22 See Bakke, 217-218.
24 See Bakke, 163.
26 Chrysostom cited in Guroian, 73.
27 Chrysostom cited in Bakke, 165.
28 See Bakke, 199.
29 See Bakke, 165-168.
bad." 30 Similar to Chrysostom and other patristic writers Jerome’s reflections on childhood is influenced by the Roman idea that children are raw material that the parents are responsible to shape, grind, and polish. Jerome thus agrees with Cicero’s view that a child deserves praise only for what he or she will become in the future. 31

Patristic writers certainly put too much weight on the shoulders of parents when they even make the parents’ own salvation conditional on the success of their child-rearing. Despite, their concern is at least evidence of a high value they give to the Christian upbringing of the children and the parental responsibility to teach them the “fear of the Lord.” Therefore, parents have to be cautious of the negative input from their pagan environment. Especially adolescents have to be under close supervision and social control. However, in this respect it is interesting to note that Christians in the first centuries nevertheless did not establish own schools in order to protect their children from pagan influences by an alternative form of education. They did not follow the example of the Jewish synagogue schools. After all, they did not have to learn a sacred language as the Jews and many Christians did not see themselves basically distinctive from their cultural environment. 32 Strange argues that although Christians in the first centuries were aware of the dangers and temptation of the paganism of their time they did not prevent their children from going to public schools. “To set up their own separate educational provision would have been to withdraw from the common life they shared

31 "It is hard to write to a little girl who cannot understand what you say, of whose mind you know nothing, and of whose inclinations it would be rash to prophesy. In the words of a famous orator “she is to be praised more for what she will be than for what she is.” Jerome, To Gaudentius, Epistle 128.1. Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.v.CXXVIII.html (accessed April 30, 2009). See also To Demetrias, Epistle 130.1. Ibid, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.v.CXXX.html.
32 The writer of the Epistle of Mathetes to Diogenetus in the second century says: “For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity... But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.” Epistle of Mathetes to Diogenetus, 5:1-5. Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/diognetus-roberts.html (accessed April 30, 2009). See also Strange, 81.
with their pagan neighbours." Nevertheless, many patristic writers argued against Greek philosophy and urged Christians to learn from the Bible and to avoid pagan literature that can "turn away from the faith" especially young people. **3** Whereas Tertullian is vehemently stressing the chasm between the Christian faith and Greek philosophy**3** he still believes it to be legitimate for Christian children to attend classical schools. Although, he would not allow a Christian teach pagan literature. Christian children need to be accustomed to the pagan environment in such a way that they understand idolatry but do reject it since they got to know God (previously) through the teaching of the parents and the Church. "But when a believer learns these things, if he is already capable of understanding what idolatry is, he neither receives nor allows them; much more if he is not yet capable. Or, when he begins to understand, it behoves him first to understand what he has previously learned, that is, touching God and the faith. Therefore he will reject those things, and will not receive them; and will be as safe as one who from one who knows it not, knowingly accepts poison, but does not drink it."**3**

However, generally patristic writings concerning the importance of child-raising are rather broad-brushed. Bakke ascertains that "there are no texts earlier than the end of the fourth century concerned specifically with the upbringing of children" respectively writings specifically concerned with the questions regarding substance and methods of

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**3** Strange, 81.

**3** "But avoid all books of the heathen. For what hast thou to do with strange sayings or laws or lying prophecies, which also turn away from the faith them that are young? For what is wanting to thee in the word of God, that thou shouldst cast thyself upon these fables of the heathen? If thou wouldst read historical narratives, thou hast the Book of Kings; but if wise men and philosophers, thou hast the Prophets, wherein thou shalt find wisdom and understanding more than that of the wise men and philosophers; for they are the words of the one God, the only wise. And if thou wish for songs, thou hast the Psalms of David; but if (thou wouldst read of) the beginning of the world, thou hast the Genesis of the great Moses; and if laws and commandments, thou hast the glorious Law of the Lord God. All strange (writings) therefore, which are contrary (to these), wholly avoid." Didascalia, 2.1.6. Ibid.

**3** "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from ‘the porch of Solomon,’ who had himself taught that ‘the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.’ Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.” Tertullian, The Prescription Against Heretics, 7. Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian11.html (accessed April 30, 2009).

Christian education. \(^{37}\) Chrysostom seems to be one of the first who wrote a Christian treatise on the education of children. \(^{38}\) He is one of very sparse represents of the patristic period who not only values the parents’ duty for a Christian education of their children but who explicitly focuses on the children themselves and on the how they should be raised.

While in the urban Greco-Roman context of the time where the upbringing of children was largely entrusted to nurses, slaves and servants \(^{39}\) it is remarkable that Chrysostom in his “Address on Vainglory” stresses the importance of the personal contact between parents and their children and that they spend more time together living a life of piety together at home with reading the Bible, prayer, singing psalms, and taking the child along to the meetings of the Christian community in order to “raise up an athlete of Christ.” \(^{40}\) In this respect Chrysostom refers also to the importance of telling biblical stories and that parents themselves should tell these in order to teach their children important truth from the Bible. He even gives several examples and provides didactic tips. \(^{41}\) Thereby Chrysostom is even attentive to “age appropriateness” \(^{42}\) since he advises parents to be careful that certain (more fearful) stories and teachings are not suitable for a younger age and should be told when the child is older. “Next, when he has grown older, tell him also more fearful tales; for thou shouldst not impose so great a burden on his understanding while he is still tender, lest thou dismay him. But when he is fifteen years old or more, let him hear of Hell.” \(^{43}\) Such an attitude reveals at least a rudimentary awareness of the importance to take the child in his proper age seriously and is quite unique at that time. Chrysostom can be seen as an outstanding representative of a rather positive view of children and childhood in early Christianity. He also believed together with other Eastern fathers that a child is innocent in the first years of his life. \(^{44}\)

A similar view is shared by Origen and Clement of Alexandria. Especially Clement influenced by his interpretation of Jesus teaching on children had a very

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37 Bakke, 152.
38 See Strange, 81.
39 See Bakke, 220-221.
40 Chrysostom, Address on Vainglory, 19.
41 Chrysostom, Address on Vainglory, 39-51. See also Guroian, 75.
42 See Guroian, 75-76. See Bakke, 106.
43 Chrysostom, Address on Vainglory, 52.
44 See Bakke, 104-105.
optimistic view of children. His positive attitude, however, is nurtured by a rather idealistic picture of children that expresses his idea of what it means to be a child of God. Nevertheless, Clement opposed a solely spiritual interpretation of Jesus’ saying about children. Jesus is talking about real children and uses them “as positive paradigms for adults.” The most outstanding quality of a small child Jesus is referring to, according to Clement, is his simplicity. On the basis of a wordplay with the Greek nepios (child) and epios (gentle) Clement says: “The child is therefore gentle, and therefore more tender, delicate, and simple, guileless, and destitute of hypocrisy, straightforward and upright in mind, which is the basis of simplicity and truth.” Although Clement seems to refer especially to infants one can notes that the positive attitude of Clement toward real children “represents a novelty in the ancient world, where childish behavior was commonly used as negative example.”

Origen (185-254 AD) like Irenaeus (ca. 140-202 AD) and Tertullian (ca. 160-220 AD) shares a positive view of the child (actually rather the infant) mainly because of his lack of sexual desire and his indifference toward status and wealth. Since reason and desire are connected and are central in the human struggle between good and evil, a child is not involved in this struggle until reason and desire grow. He believes that the growth of reason develops together with the ability to speak. Origen, however, does not specify when a child looses his innocence.

Some years before Origen the Shepherd of Hermas (ca. 150 AD) states: “Keep simplicity and be guileless, and thou shalt be as little children, that know not the wickedness which destroyeth the life of men.” An just around 100 AD in the letter of Barnabas the author connects the renewal of men through Christ with the (clean) soul of children: “Forasmuch then as He renewed us in the remission of sins, He made us to be a new type, so that we should have the soul of children, as if He were recreating us.”

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45 Bakke, 59.
47 Bakke, 63.
48 See Bakke, 66 and 69-70.
49 Bakke, 66.
However, despite such positive attitudes concerning little children the actual concern of
the patristic period lies more on the question of innocence than on the child himself.

The discussion about the nature of the child respectively the question of innocence
and the sinful nature culminated with Augustine (354-430 AD). In the controversy with
the Pelagians he reacted against an overly optimistic view of human capacity to overcome
sin by drawing conclusions from his own childhood and conversion experience. In doing
this he dismissed any claims for the innate innocence of infants and children. Children
enter this world with a nature already marked by original sin and therefore they are not
innocent. “This sinful nature can be seen in the infant’s greed for
its mother’s breast and in the jealousy it shows when other children lie at the mother’s or
wet nurse’s breast.” 52 However, Augustine acknowledges that an infant neither has the
possibility nor the capacity to actively commit a sinful act. Nevertheless it is not
innocent. Martha Ellen Stortz therefore suggests that Augustine taught the “non-
innocence” of infants, 53 a status that gradually turns to guilt and depravity with age and a
growing accountability. Augustine adopted a view of several human life stages of
graduated guilt. 54 Infancy is thus a stage of non-innocence marked by a sinful nature that
lets the baby grasp for the breast even when it is fed. Childhood is marked by the
growing ability to speak and with language comes the difference between obedience and
disobedience for which a child is accountable. Adolescence comes with puberty but it is
not as many would argue marked by sexual desire rather by reflecting on his own
adolescent experience of stealing pears from a neighbor’s yard adolescence is marked by
freely and willingly do wrong and thus voluntary violating divine justice. “When
children reach adolescence, their abilities to speak and reason are so developed that they
are fully accountable for their deeds.” 55 Nevertheless, at any stage the child deserves
eternal punishment unless it is saved by Christ through the act of baptism. Early baptism
thus becomes a necessity. By arguing against Pelagians and in favor of original sin
Augustine’s reflection on children and their character was focused on the negative. What

52 Bakke, 105.
54 See Stortz, 83-87.
55 Bakke, 104.
could be seen as developmental issues he examined for evidence of the evil in human nature.

**Perception of Children and Young People in the Middle Age**

The concept of childhood (including youth) as distinctive phases of life is very much culturally dependant. Whereas in antiquity the idea of childhood as well as youth emerges and finds some reflection in Greco-Roman philosophy concerning attitudes, legal status, place in society and education, the Middle Age remains strikingly silent. Philippe Ariès in his seminal history of childhood in the Middle Age actually concludes that “in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist.”\(^{56}\) This may be a rather pithy statement since, of course, there have been children under parental care and affection and thus some reflection about children but as Ariès argues medieval society did not have a reflected awareness of the particular nature of childhood that would distinguish children from adults. “As soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to adult society.”\(^{57}\) The child played the games of the adults wore their cloth and learned what was necessary in direct contact to the world of adults. It was not the actual family that played the most important role in the upbringing since usually children soon detached themselves from their parental bond and grew up in the larger social context of their milieu. The childhood spent in the family was too short to receive specific consideration. Although the child experienced a “coddling” attitude from parents and other adults in his infant years he was nevertheless perceived with indifference. Such a feeling of indifference is evident in a lack of records of children, no pictures of real children or inscriptions up to the sixteenth century. Not only was childhood “simply an unimportant phase of which there was no need to keep any record”\(^ {58}\) it was also too fragile. Child mortality was high and many children disappeared soon. According to Gillis fifty percent of the children

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\(^{57}\) Ibid. This was similar to ancient times and up to the beginning of modern times especially true in the lower classes of society. See Ariès, 411.

\(^{58}\) Ariès, 38.
died before they reached the age of twenty.\textsuperscript{59} Parents gave birth to several children in order to keep at least a few.

In the medieval society where a child according to Ariès immediately passed from childhood to adulthood adolescence or youth as a time of transition from childhood to adulthood was hardly recognized. Interestingly, whereas in ancient times puberty was commonly considered to be an important ‘event’ that marked a transition in a young person’s life, as we have seen, often accompanied with some kind of rite de passage, in medieval times the puberty did not meant to be the end of childhood. The end of childhood was not bound to any biological and psychological phenomena but rather to the social criterion of dependency. Young people or adolescents could “leave childhood only by leaving the state of dependence, or at least the lower degrees of dependence.”\textsuperscript{60}

Thus, childhood as such was not defined by age but by a social status. An adolescent or youth in our terms was in medieval times socially and economically dependant from his parents and therefore still considered to be a child but in contrary an adult was not. Thus, the end of childhood is given with marriage, the founding of a joint household and economic independence from parental home.

The medieval terminology for childhood was therefore rather vague. A child or a boy could be six years of age but also twenty-four. “Even when a vocabulary relating to infancy appeared [such as bébé] and expanded, an ambiguity remained between childhood and adolescence on the one hand and the category known as youth on the other. People had no idea of what we call adolescence, and the idea was long time taking shape.”\textsuperscript{61} Although there are many medieval texts dealing with the ages of life there is no consistent definition of adolescence and youth.\textsuperscript{62} Some where oriented on the Greek or Aristotelian age classification with a common pattern of seven years, accordingly the first two stages are infancy (0-7 years) and pueritia (8-14 years) but with adolescentia there are discrepancies. It could end with twenty-one but also last up to thirty-five years.

\textsuperscript{60} Ariès, 26.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, 29.
\textsuperscript{62} See Michel Pastoureau, “Emblems of Youth: Young People in Medieval Imagery,” in A History of Young People in the West – Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage, 222-223.
However, the prime time of life was reached with juvenus that lasted until forty-five or even fifty years. Thus, the term youth in medieval times was similar to ancient times a denotation of the adult, fully developed, strong and vigorous man. Adolescence as such was not important and therefore as a term often “confused with childhood.”

Generally and especially in rural areas the medieval society, as it was true in ancient times, was not interested in specific stages of life. As soon as he had the physical ability a child was part of the world of adults and was expected to participate in that world by collaboration. The social classification did not follow age but rather function and status. The legal status of children and youth in medieval times or rather the legal age of majority varies through the centuries. In the Sachsenspiegel which is a record of existing German tribal law written in the thirteenth century seems to equal puberty with legal majority in the age of twelve. Now, the child was considered to be an adult. Later with the rediscovery of the Roman law the majority threshold raised to eighteen and in late medieval times even to twenty-two or twenty-five.

It seems that youth was considered to be an unreliable age since it was not allowed for a man under twenty-five to trade or to possess any commodities. However, the raising of the age of majority was not intended to protect the youth from child labour—generally, a child of seven years was expected to work and get economically active—but the aim was to receive a youth in the adult world only when he was up to the social demands. It was also common that children left home in an early age of about seven or eight years and thus changed their status of dependency to a partial dependency. From that time on they were no longer seen as children. Many children lived through their youth apart from home.

According to Ariès’ thesis the family in medieval times “did not exist as a concept” since in a medieval family people as masters and servants, children and adults lived on top of one another in houses open at all hours to anyone so that there was hardly

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63 Ariès, 25.
64 See Matthias Winter, Kindheit und Jugend im Mittelalter (Freiburg i. Br.: Hochschul Verlag, 1984), 168.
65 Winter, 170-172.
66 Ibid, 173.
67 Ibid.
69 Ariès, 406
any privacy. The mission of the family was the preservation of property, the execution of a conjoint trade, and the mutual care in a world in which no one could survive alone. Affection and care for children was secondary and as in ancient times rather seen as an investment to the future.

It is thus not surprising that children and youth are also almost inexistent in Christian reflections of the Middle Age. Although some kind of high esteem of the child could be seen in the rather misty-eyed adoration of the childhood of Jesus by Bernhard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 AD) or Francis of Assisi (1181-1226 AD) but such regard did not have an actual impact on a specific attitude towards real children. Generally the perception of childhood in the Middle Age is oriented on the Greco-Roman view of the child as incomplete, and being without reason. Regarding theological reflection the child is merely in focus regarding the problem of original sin and the issue of infant baptism.

After Augustine there is a continuing struggle to preserve and express the doctrine of original sin “without eroding beliefs in both divine justice and divine mercy toward the weak and vulnerable.” In this discussion Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) plays an important part. Influenced by both Augustine and Aristotle Thomas envisions childhood “as a developmental stage with peculiar and evolving needs and characteristics.” He measures the process of human maturation following Greek philosophy from incompleteness to completion largely by the capacity to reason and the ability to make and act on responsible choices. Thus, he divides childhood in stages as infantia, pueritia, and adolescentia distinguished by the capacity to reason and each of which with a duration of seven years. “The first is when a person neither understands by himself nor is able to learn from another; the second stage is when a man can learn from another but is incapable by himself of consideration and understanding; the third degree is when a man is both able to learn from another and to consider by himself.” At the beginning of the second stage (pueritia) a boy has to be sent to school and at the end which is in the age of

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70 Ibid, 405.
73 Ibid, 110.
fourteen years a young man is able to make responsible decisions regarding marriage and religion and is thus considered to be an adult. After the third seven years a young man has legally reached adulthood since “according to the laws he is given the power of disposing of his property after his twenty-second year.” Girls reach puberty in the age of twelve years boys in the age of fourteen.

Although Thomas Aquinas establishes a theological justification for a developmental model of childhood his writings on the subject in many respects reflect common or Greek perceptions. Male children are to be preferred since they are compared to females as perfect to the imperfect and due to their tendency toward emotional volatility girls are less rational than boys and therefore of lower value. Greek philosophy rather than creation theology leads to such a conclusion. Apart from theoretical reflections the child himself does not have space in Thomas’ writings nor is there any direct advice for parents about child rearing. Generally, the children’s duty is obedience, and that’s it.

Together with Augustine Thomas believes that infants die without having committed actual sin but they still deserve eternal damnation since they bear the stain of original sin. In order to reconcile this fact with the idea of a just and loving God Thomas comes up with a unique theological invention. He declares the existence of the limbus infantium, the children’s limbo. This is a hell without severe punishment for infants and little children that die unbaptized. Since baptism of infants protects from eternal damnation and the fate of hell parents are urged to arrange baptism for a newborn speedily.

A very similar perception of childhood is shared by Giles of Rome (1243-1316 AD) a disciple of Thomas Aquinas and a member of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine in his work de regimine principum libri II. Since according to the conception

75 Traina, 119.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 See Traina, 123.
of Aristotle man is seen as *animale rationale* Giles follows Thomas' classification of childhood of three stages by the capacity to reason and amends some basic instructions for education. The first seven years (*infantia*) is determined by an almost total lack of reason and the dominance of the desire for consumption (*concupiscentia*). Following Augustine's argument this manifestation of the disposition of evil is seen in a child's striving for the mother's breast. Since the child in the first stage is soft as wax he has to be shaped and coined especially in these years with the aim to restrain fleshly lust. In the second stage (*pueritia*) where the sinful forces get stronger and reason is still underdeveloped the will of the child has to be educated by accustoming the young to performing good morals. In the third stage actual education begins with the aim of self control.82

The Greek concept of childhood as an incomplete human life stage due to the lack of reason is also alive in medieval humanism. The high esteem of human reason for instance leads Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (ca. 1466-1536 AD) to a rather negative picture of childhood. A child without reason is merely an animal. "Nature, in giving you a son, presents you, let me say, a rude, unformed creature, which it is your part to fashion so that it may become indeed a man. If this fashioning be neglected you have but an animal."83 Erasmus therefore urges parents to properly teach their children and facilitate education. Since children do not only belong to them but to the country and God as well parents have a high responsibility to not neglect this duty.84

The view that a child is not yet a real human being is also supported by the French scientist and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662 AD). Pascal too believes that only with a developed reason which happens at about twenty years of age actual humanity begins. Late medieval humanism as well as reformed moralists during the Reformation movement generally considered the child as Steven Ozment states as "a creature in search of humanity."

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84 Erasmus, *Declaratio de Pueris*, 494A-495A. Ibid.
"Although each child was thought to have an inner disposition to rationality and moral virtue, Erasmus and his contemporaries also believed that the bestial could triumph over rationality in a child. On this issue Erasmus and Luther agreed, and it was not by chance that each characterized unacceptable behavior as animal-like... A child was not believed to be truly human simply by birthright; he was a creature in search of humanity—unpredictable, capable of animal indolence, selfishness, and savagery—traits that would dominate his adult life if they were not controlled in childhood. The rational and moral self-control that raised humans above animals did not come as an inalienable endowment of nature; it was a state of maturity into which each child had to grow by hard, persistent exercise under vigilant parental and tutorial discipline."85

Such a perception of childhood can be regarded as a general opinion in medieval times since it is also supported by other influential and leading thinkers like the French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650 AD) and it sustains in the Enlightenment.86

However, the Reformation especially with Martin Luther (1483-1546 AD) carries in kernel some rudimentary new approaches concerning the perception of the childhood. Luther in his attitude towards children was influenced by Augustine and Erasmus and his "theological perceptions of childhood and youth were complex."87 Along Augustinian tradition Luther also believed that a child enters life already deserving damnation because of his infection with original sin. Luther, thus, "was a ferocious defender of the practice of infant baptism."88 But since salvation comes only by faith (sola fide) Luther especially in his argumentation against Anabaptists plays with the possibility that even infants do have faith and can be moved by the Spirit of God. He believes that children have an inherent ability to trust, fear and love God.89 Thus, even infants can be spiritual. However, Luther did not further elaborate this idea. His general perception was still as seen above rather in accordance to Erasmus.

As a former Augustinian monk Luther with his new understanding of Scripture and salvation came to see that the ordinary life especially in the context of marriage and parenting is not contradicting a spiritual life. Being married and having children are no obstacles for a life devoted to God and of spiritual perfection. It is thus not surprising

86 See Hanisch, 4:696.
88 Ibid, 141.
89 Ibid.
that Luther himself agreed to marry and start a family. Luther himself was a loving and passionate father and also experienced the tragedy of the loss of two of his children. The first daughter died with nine month and the second, Magdalena, with thirteen. Luther’s grief over the early death of his teenage girl was though full of hope sincere and severe and reveals a deep closeness to his child. About Luther as a father Jane Strohl concludes that “all the desirable attributes of the parent-child relationship are here for Luther.”90 His positive attitude towards children and parenthood was based on the theological conviction that marriage and thus raising children is one of the highest vocations.91 Ordinary family life is not contradicting a devoted spiritual life rather it is an integral part of it. Luther explicitly sees the father not only as the head of the family but as such also very much involved in early parenting.

“Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool—though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith—my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling—not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith.”92

Both, mother and father share the priesthood of all believers and thus are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children. Of course, this vocation includes to raise the children in the true faith and to attend to their education for vocation. The foundation for the mission of the church and the advance of the gospel is the home. The home is also the natural locus to catechize the children. Luther therefore was eager to document the reformed faith not only generally in his Large Catechism but also to provide a Small Catechism for domestic use so that parents are enabled to teach their children basic biblical truth at home. Further, Luther was quite in line with humanists in his emphasis of the importance of sending children to school. Parents who have their children learn just the basic things to somehow make a living must “either be crazy, or without love” for their offspring.93 Interestingly, Luther did also lobby for the education of girls. However,

90 Ibid, 158.
91 See Strohl, 139-140.
92 Luther, LW 45:40-41 cited in Strohl, 140.
even in Protestant circles the practical implementation of this noble request remained rather a good idea throughout the sixteenth century.\(^9^4\)

It was according to Luther also the parent’s duty to play an active role concerning the marriage of their children. Following the common perceptions of human development in a seven-year cycle Luther was alert when a child came to the end of the second cycle, since with fourteen the sex drive is awake and a child becomes aggressive and defiant of authority. The proper response to puberty is not to artificially prolong childhood by trying “to delay the psychological confrontation with this new phase of personhood” as some suggested but “to get on with the arrangement of a suitable marriage.”\(^9^5\) However, parents neither ought compel their children to marriage nor force them to celibacy. Although, generally children have to obey their parents even in these matters Luther allows the child in this respect some freedom of choice.

Since children are our closest neighbors we have to love and care for, raising children is not only the parent’s duty but all adults must exercise the vocation of parenting in one way or another. In his address “To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany” Luther insists that all citizens are responsible to have a share in the Christian upbringing of children by attending to their physical welfare, their vocational prospects, their need to learn of Jesus Christ through preaching, catechesis, and the experience of human care and protection. “Indeed, for what purpose do we older folks exist, other than to care for, instruct, and bring up the young?”\(^9^6\) This is a striking call to make the care for children and the provision for their physical as well as spiritual growth a central and collective duty for the church and the whole society.

In this light Ariès may be too pessimistic in his presentation of the child in the medieval times and his theses that there was no concept of childhood and family are in their absoluteness hardly acceptable. However, it is certainly true that being a child in medieval times was very much different from our times. Ariès’ point with the declaration of “the discovery of childhood”\(^9^7\) is that at the end of the Middle Ages and with the dawn of Modernity there is actually a striking change happening concerning the

\(^9^4\) See Strohl, 151-152.
\(^9^5\) Strohl, 145.
\(^9^6\) Luther cited in Strohl, 159.
\(^9^7\) This is actually the title of the second chapter of his book.
perception of childhood and the family as well as regarding the attitude towards children and their status in society; a change that takes the childhood from the fringe of society more to the centre stage. Finally, the sociological changes taking place lead not only to the “discovery of childhood” (Ariès) but to the actual emergence of the age of adolescence.

Summary

Despite some positive attitudes concerning little children, over all, the patristic period in many respects remained conventional and finally rather pessimistic in its perception and attitude regarding children. Rudimentary already evident in the epistles of the New Testament the patristic writers even more are rather concerned with the children’s obedience to parents and the parents’ duty for Christian upbringing than with the child himself. Although, with John Chrysostom new approaches emerge, they do not find further exploration and development. Children and youth somehow vanish in the gathering darkness of the emerging Middle Age.

Whereas in the patristic writings up to the end of the third century (and especially among eastern sources) the idea that infants are innocent, or at least morally neutral, predominated an obvious break occurs at the beginning of the fifth century with Augustine and a pessimistic anthropology. The rather negative view of children is additionally enhanced with a growing idealization of a life of religious perfection, self denial, and asceticism, manifested in things like the glorification of martyrdom, the monastic life, celibacy and pilgrimage, since in this context the idea is nurtured that children rather pose an obstacle for a holy and devoted life.

The Christian discussion was more concerned with the sinful state of children and the parental duty to discipline children and youth than with the child himself. The general perception of the youth in the context of the medieval church was rather negative. The adolescent is threatened and entrained by all sorts of dangerous stimuli and fervors. Therefore early marriage was fostered and the status of marriage actually marked the end of childhood respectively youth.

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98 Following Ariès it would be more appropriate to speak about a rediscovery of childhood.
99 See Bakke, 105 and 281.
Apart from the theological discussions about the sinful state of a child the emerging Medieval societies did not pay much attention to children and the general ancient, especially Greek perceptions of childhood were still widely accepted. Contrary to ancient times in the Middle Age puberty was hardly celebrated with a specific *rite de passage* to indicate the beginning of adulthood.

However, with the rediscovery of the Roman law the majority threshold raised to eighteen and in late medieval times even to twenty-two or twenty-five. There have been some legislations regarding youth (for instance trading restrictions) that indicate that in some aspects of the social life young people as "full-sized immature adults"\textsuperscript{100} have been treated differently than other adults. Nevertheless, as soon as the child could live without the constant care he or she belonged to the adult society and was commonly seen as a miniature version of an adult. Children grew up among adults and the social stratum they were born into and quite early in life they worked with them. Family bonds were not that intense compared with modern societies. Generally speaking, in the medieval society a child immediately passed from childhood to adulthood and adolescence or youth as a time of transition from childhood to adulthood was hardly socially recognized.

APPENDIX H

THE EMERGENCE OF ADOLESCENCE

The modern era is dawning with the beginning of the sixteenth century and is characterized as a period of significant developments in the fields of science, politics, and technology. As an age of discovery and globalization it is also a period of change especially regarding society in the western world. The transition from the feudal system of medieval times to a civil and capitalistic society, though a lingering process, is speeded up by the industrial revolution incipient in the eighteenth century.

A New Upper-Class Adolescence

Already in the sixteenth century the influence and importance of the nobility and gentry lose ground for the benefit of the growing bourgeoisie. Whereas actual education was a privilege of the upper class the middle class in the context of new economic tasks and a continuing extension of trade and craft recognized the importance of an appropriate education. In addition, the humanistic ideal supported by the Reformation called for a better and extended education of the young. In the upper segment of society school-attendance more and more displaced the traditional and common vocational training in the business of the father or the family. Thus, middle-class youth have been gradually separated from the adult world in order to be taught and educated in the schools.

In the medieval Latin schools there was an indifference to the separation and distinction of children and youth. “The medieval school was not intended for children” and “it welcomed equally and indifferently children, youths, adults, the precocious and the backward, at the foot of the magisterial rostrum.”1 The different ages were mixed and often mingled in one big room up to the nineteenth century throughout the Western World. “Age norms of all kinds were rather loosely maintained. The pattern—or, rather, the absence of pattern—can...be seen in the records of school attendance. In virtually all the schools of the period students of widely differing ages were mixed up together, often

\[1\] Aries, 330.
in a single classroom.\footnote{2} In the eighteenth century, however, the division in separate classes of ages began in Europe and the school cycle was extended to four to five years.\footnote{3} This development already indicates a slight change of attitude towards children and youth and a growing awareness of an age-based education that slowly paved its way. Later, the membership to a specific class of age at school could serve as a mean of identification for youths.\footnote{4} The development of the school in early modern age extended childhood “by almost the entire duration of the school cycle”\footnote{5} and became a decisive factor concerning the growing importance and prolongation of adolescence.

Since adolescence as a distinctive stage of transition from childhood to adulthood or from dependence to independence is directly connected to a further development of the school and especially of a secondary education it first emerges in the realm of the upper-class. Here, the former aristocratic young lord amalgamates with the young man of the bourgeoisie. Before the entrance to the labour force, the adolescent of the wealthy and leading society shall have the possibility to brace himself up for the future social life. The school as a renewed social institution rather supported the social order and the establishment from the end of the Middle Age up to the first half of Modernity since it was hardly in reach for children of the majority, the common people. The experience of a ‘new adolescence’ was thus a privilege of the middle class and the élite.

But with John Locke’s (1632-1704 AD) ideas concerning childhood and education the establishment was already threatened. Locke broke with traditional concepts of childhood and the idea of the child as an animal rationale since he believed that the mind of a newborn can be linked to a blank slate (tabula rasa) that will be written on by experience. “Whether the child will turn out to be an adult who is informed or ignorant, thoughtful or reckless, law-abiding or criminal depends on the way society has ‘written’ on this blank slate.”\footnote{6} In consequence that would mean that any child might have the capability to be an ingenious adult and accomplish great things so that a farmer’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item[3] If at all the common pupil spent about one or two years in school during medieval times.
\item[5] Ibid, 334.
\end{footnotes}
child could become a physician or a cardinal. Although Locke’s approach was controversial and did not succeed it paved the way for later movements that supported equal educational opportunities for all children and he stressed the responsibility of the society to shape its young into valuable citizens.

With his concern for the proper education of the whole person for citizenship it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778 AD) who described for the first time childhood and the ‘new adolescence’ as from adulthood separated and distinct phases of life in his pedagogic novel “Emile” (1762 AD) which marks the beginning of modern pedagogical reflection. Rousseau could actually be seen as one of the first to advocate developmentally appropriate education. Similar to Locke some decades before, Rousseau opposed the idea of inherent sin or the belief that the child is borne sinful and rather “viewed childhood as a positive state.” But unlike Locke Rousseau “was sceptical about the intentions as well as the ability of society to provide effective learning opportunities.” He was rather optimistic and convinced that children should develop in their own natural ways. He also urged to pay attention to the child as a child and not as an incomplete adult.

Rousseau could be designated as “the first thoroughgoing developmentalist.” His division of childhood breaks with the classical Greek concepts. The first stage of childhood is infancy. The second stage where children are guided by their emotions and impulses lasts until the age of twelve. Up to this age Rousseau believed “that the child’s own nature would guide him” and therefore he rejected the idea to immediately mold the unformed child. Between twelve and sixteen, the third stage, reason starts to develop but the adolescent should not be educated by pure book learning during this stage. The fourth stage, from sixteen onwards, is the time when the child develops into an adult. Now a more formal education can take place and the youth is capable to deal with the emotions of adolescence concerning the opposite sex, with moral issues and religion. In

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7 Locke’s ideas for instance found an expression in the U.S. Constitution. See Kastenbaum, 115.
9 Kastenbaum, 116.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
this stage, according to Rousseau’s Emile, a youth is to introduce slowly into society’s pressures. However, Rousseau’s Emile was still a member of the bourgeoisie and a privileged youth.

**The Arrival of the Age of Adolescence**

Until well into the nineteenth century such an adolescent experience was often far away from children of the common people. First of all, the school was not in reach for children and secondary education no option for adolescents of the lower society let alone for girls of all social classes. For most of the young the school was not that essential anyway but rather an opportunity for personal betterment. For boys apprenticeship was much more important since it allowed them to leave home and learn a skill if there was no opportunity in the family business. Still, for most of the children in the eighteen and nineteenth century of the Western World there was an immediate social change from childhood to adulthood. That change of status was rather based on a boy’s size and physical capacity than on his age. “‘Full’ incorporation probably occurred around the time of puberty—that is, at 15 a boy was judged physically able to carry a man’s work load. Prior to the middle of the 19th century, contemporaries associated puberty with rising power and energy rather than with the onset of an awkward and vulnerable stage of life which would later become known as adolescence.”

As we discovered, during centuries and way back to ancient times the common family system as well as the basic perception and status of the child were subject to just marginal changes. By the vast majority people lived in rural settings and children were needed for the economic survival of the family. Young and old in the family was engaged as soon and as long as possible in the family business, be it farming, handicraft, trade, or some other kind of cottage industry. Usually the family was an extended system of coexistence with children, parents, grandparents, slaves or servants and maidservants under the same roof. The child rather grew up in his social milieu than in an intimate relationship with his parents; though both parents were at home. The father, as the unchallenged head of the family, did not spend respectively work most of the time

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12 Ibid, 367-368.
13 Kett, 17.
somewhere else. But with the advent of the Industrial Revolution an unprecedented social change occurs. New economic perspectives offered by growing industries and the consequent urbanization draw more and more people to the fast growing cities. The place of work is separated from the place of home and working people especially the fathers are thus absent from the family for most of the time. But working conditions changed for children too.

In the early phase of the Industrial Revolution child labor was still very common. Already in medieval times children had often been sent into service at an early age. Child labor as such was therefore not a completely new phenomenon among the working class. What changed is the working context from the family to the factory. As the work moved to the mill, the children moved with it, and they no longer were under the care of their parents or other family members within the respective family economy. Thus, not only the fathers went to work outside, children and youth have been sent out to work too. There are reports that children under the age of five already worked in production factories under dangerous, and often fatal, working conditions.14

But rationalization as well as new child-labor laws eventually reduced the number of working children near the end of the nineteenth century. Usually, children did the work adults avoided but they were by and by replaced by more productive adult labour (often women replaced children) and by industrial automation. The “children were the first group of workers to be rationalized away from industrial production.”15 Eventually, child-labour laws came up in the Western World near the end of the nineteenth century and thus, “children were the first group of workers for whom the law stipulated, for example, the maximum working day, the right to breaks and protection against occupational diseases and accidents.”16 Finally, the laws even forbid child labor at all in many countries. In England, for instance, children younger than nine were no longer allowed to work, night work was not permitted for older children, and the work day of youth under eighteen of years was limited to twelve hours. Later the employment of children in some branches as mining was forbidden. Due to the advancement of

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15 Ibid, 218.
16 Ibid.
technology and a growing number of European immigrants to the USA “young people were no longer needed in the labor pool and by 1914 every U.S. state save one had passed child labor laws.”\textsuperscript{17} Additionally, the weekly working hours of older youth have been limited. Such regulations finally “would be joined by compulsory education legislation and special legal protections for juveniles.”\textsuperscript{18}

While modern mechanization pushed families to the cities and dramatically changed the working context the traditional and often extended family system started to disintegrate. Since modern production needed fewer workers and child labor laws forbid the early integration of the young into the working life children as well as young people found themselves with little to do. Besides, the social changes led to a moral decline, especially among the youth. “With the rise of technology, the sheltered world of the village, extended family, and church was shattered. Industrialization caused jobs to be concentrated in centers. Families needing income left the nurturing environment of the small village and followed the promise of a better life to the city. Lost in transition was the spiritual and moral accountability, for good or bad, which was present in extended family and parish life. Youth fell prey to the temptations that abounded in the city.”\textsuperscript{19}

There have been even many children and youth in cities that were separated from their families or orphaned. So, they were playing in the streets or well adapted to urban life sought any opportunity to earn some coins, legal and illegal. Thus, society had to react by offering alternatives. Rahikainen concludes that “keeping urban working-class children off the streets and away from ‘idleness’ was behind many determined, even harsh public and private initiatives of the time...The measures included compulsory education and work organised by the authorities or reformers for children in the street.”\textsuperscript{20}

At the end of the nineteenth century these developments fostered the idea of compulsory secondary schooling. Gradually the secondary education became no longer the privilege of the middle-class and the élite and thus did no longer maintain the middle-class hegemony. Nevertheless, until the early twentieth century for many children there was just a basic education available and they “became responsible working people while

\textsuperscript{17} Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 7.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Rahikainen, 217.
they were still in early adolescence."21 It was not until the Second World War that a profound school reform provided an equal education for all children and youth in most of the countries of the Western World and extended the compulsory education to at least nine years, which in practice soon became twelve years. "In the post-war decades of economic growth it was deemed that all children should have the right to a middle class childhood."22

It seems obvious that by these developments beginning with the Industrial Revolution and especially in the later nineteenth century "the rapid passage from childhood to adulthood had ceased, making way for a new understanding of the young as a cohort needing specialization through a liminal stage of education, thereby making a way for the arrival of the 'adolescent'."23 From a sociohistorical point of view Joseph Kett therefore argues that adolescence is an invention of modernity and did not exist before: "If adolescence is defined as the period after puberty during which a young person is institutionally segregated from casual contacts with a broad range of adults, then it can scarcely be said to have existed at all."24

Retardation, Acceleration, and Prolongation

As seen, several societal developments contributed to the emergence of the modern adolescent at the end of the nineteenth century and gave birth to the new life phase of youth. "A youth stage arises only where fully adult social roles are postponed beyond the point in the life cycle at which puberty typically occurs and where age-homogeneous groupings of young people mark the transition period between childhood and full social maturity."25

When sociologist and psychologist first identified adolescence as a new specific phase of life around the turn to the twentieth century this transition or intermediate time

21 Barry Gane, "Understanding Young People – Why a Special Youth Ministry?," in Getting it Right: A Power-Packed Resource for Adventist Youth Leaders (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 77.
22 Rahikainen, 220.
23 Root, 28.
24 Kett, 36.
period between childhood and actual adulthood generally lasted about three to four years. Since then “the adolescent journey has significantly lengthened over the years.”

The German sociologist Klaus Hurrelmann points to the fact that during the twentieth century not only the general life span extended from an average life expectancy of 65 years to 75 years for men respectively 81 years for women today but also the actual course of life got more and more segmented into several almost self-contained life phases. In the course of social history youth became one of the most important phases of life. “Sie [youth] hat sich seit 1900 in schnellen Schritten immer weiter ausgedehnt, teilweise auf Kosten der Phase Kindheit und Erwachsenenalter, und insgesamt nach Länge und biografischer Bedeutung eine Schlüsselstellung im gesamten Lebenslauf gewonnen.”

Until about 1900 the general course of life still had a rather simple structure and just involved childhood and adulthood. By the 1950s there is already a differentiation of the life span now including youth and the retirement age. At the expenses of adulthood youth as well as the retirement age further expanded by the year 2000. Hurrelmann states that for the first time in history adulthood is in danger to lose the status of being the life-perspective centre of the human biography and just to be a phase of life among others. This trend will continue in this century and the youth as well as the retirement age will further expand.

As Hurrelmann points out, the prolongation of the age of adolescence or youth happens at the expenses of both adulthood and childhood. That adolescence in the western world today generally lasts until the mid or even late twenties is just one side of the development. The other side of the development is the fact that adolescence begins earlier. In fact, a general acceleration of puberty over time can be observed. The menarche, the start of the menstruation by girls, often serves as an objective indicator of the beginning of puberty. Since the end of the 19th century the time of menarche shifted. “The timing of menarche has undergone a steady decline in the past century. The

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27 Hurrelmann, 16. My translation: “It [youth] expanded further and further in a fast pace since 1900, partially at the expenses of the phases childhood and adulthood, and all in all gained in length and biographical significance a key position in the course of life.”
28 See Hurrelmann, 17.
average age at which menarche occurred among American girls in the 1880s was 15 years. By the 1990s this age dropped to between 11.9 and 12.8 years.”29 Thus, there is even physiological evidence for a prolongation of adolescence. An earlier pubescence and the prolongation of adolescence with a retardation of the actual entrance into adult and working life—including marriage—create new societal challenges. However, from a sociological point of view youth, is in any respect “a flexible and contestable social category.”30

APPENDIX I

YOUTH AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL FORCE IN SOCIETY

Youth and Culture

Culture in general is passed down to a new generation through participation with others in society and not through biological means. In the process of socialization and in guiding adolescents into full cultural membership the role of adults is unquestionably central. Nevertheless, young people themselves do play an active part in their socialization and cultural adaption.

Since culture basically is the counterpart of all that humans by nature are or inherit (things that are artificial, contrived, acquired, or learned) it “comprises language, habits, ides, beliefs, customs, social organizations, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values.”1 As such culture influences how people manage their lives and how they interpret their society. It is a way of life and a “means of social interaction and expression.”2 In short it can also be defined as the “inherited patterns of shared meanings and common understandings.”3 With cultures people respond by accepting, rejecting, or modifying, new ways of thinking and doing as well as adjusting values and behaviors to deal with them. Therefore, culture is neither static nor homogenous. It is rather a dynamic social system made by humans themselves encompassing various subsystems or subcultures with distinctive sets of behaviors and beliefs. Cultural responding is a phenomenon happening on different cultural levels and among different groups of people within a society4 and often constitutes subcultures. Subcultures in general form “when

4 Ward Goodenough identifies seven cultural senses or levels. It starts with a person’s system of standards that encompasses personal expectations for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and performing and that helps to make judgments what to value and what behavior to choose in various social contexts. A second sense of culture refers to distinct but often stereotyped attributes or assigned character traits associated with groups of others like “Swiss people are very punctual and clean.” The third sense is the operating culture which designates the standards and systems of a society and that like a societal operating system consciously or subconsciously works among the people of the society. With public culture Goodenough refers to the specific forms of thoughts and behaviors that are expected in different public social domains of
groups have difficulties achieving status within the normal, legitimate avenues of a dominant culture." Although subcultures develop cultural practices that are distinct from the dominant culture they still borrow many things from it.

Since youth are about to develop their own identity and are about to become autonomous individuals as they grow through adolescence they have to culturally respond to the society within they are expected to acquire responsibilities and become part of.

**Youth Culture**

The public and scientific awareness of a specific youth culture grew in the first half of the twentieth century. In the course of the fundamental societal changes caused by the industrialization, the separation of young people from the adult life, and the gathering of peers in large numbers for education young people responded to their changing social context with generating various forms of subcultures. The growing scientific interest in the study of youth culture at that time was not as much concerned with youth directly as it was "with deviant subcultures." Distinctive youth cultures have in fact "not been part of all societies throughout history" and often are understood "as a response to the social class conflicts associated with industrialized societies." The gathering of large numbers of youth for education and the increased urbanization fostered the peer group to become a "mass social institution in its own right, at times

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5 Erwin, 53.


8 Bucholtz, 539. This rather stereotyped definition is challenged by the fact that nonindustrial societies may also have recognizable youth cultures. See ibid.
creating alternatives that were visibly opposed to adult cultural and social norms.”

Although the conditions for the emergence of mass youth culture were in place there has never been a singular youth culture. Young people did not become a homogeneous social group but rather developed a wide variety of youth subcultures. Many of the subsequent youth cultures appear only at particular historical moments, become visible, identified, and labeled, but fade or get diffused and lose their distinctiveness. Youth subcultures emerge especially in the post-war period and in the context of the post-war social changes of the working class which also ‘produced’ the new youth “with his commitment to style, music, leisure and consumption.”

The increased importance of the market and consumption gives way to a specific youth market as well as the growth of a youth-oriented leisure industry and mass media. The youth has been identified as a new consumer group and subcultural developments are since then carefully studied and marketed. Despite the imitation and manipulation of youth subcultures by media, industry and a growing mass culture young people managed to creatively and continuously produce separate spheres of cultural activities and behaviors. Youth subcultures are not preconceived by adults and industry rather they are a reflection of what is going on in society and a reaction to what young people experience.

Youth cultures represent young people’s responses to the changing world and the adult society and are unique ways of explaining and communicating their experience. “Subcultures,” according to Garrett, “give young people the chance to express their difference from the rest of society, yet coexist within it. More importantly, they enable young people to find their own individual identity, yet still have the support of group

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9 It has been argued that the subculturization is the result of urbanism. See Mike Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1980), 10.
11 For a discussion and characterization of various forms of youth subcultures among British working class youth see Brake, 71-85.
12 The cornerstones of these changes are seen in *affluence* (the boom in working class consumer spending), *consensus* (the political and social drawing together of all classes), and *embourgeoisement* (the rapid assimilation towards middle class patterns, aspirations, and values). See John Clarke et al., “Subcultures, Cultures and Class,” in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds. (London: Routledge, 1990), 21.
13 Ibid.
14 The first to identify “the teenage consumer” was the sociologist Mark Abrahams (*The Teenage Consumer*, 1959). See Garratt, 147.
solidarity."\textsuperscript{16} For many adolescents subcultures are a means to create and establish an identity within a society that makes it difficult to locate a sense of self. Although often commercialized such manifestations as music, style, fashion, leisure pursuits, etc., may serve adolescents as a "symbolic representation of identity"\textsuperscript{17} and they may "project a different cultural response or 'solution' to the problems posed for them"\textsuperscript{18} by their social context. During adolescence youth can perform an "alternative script"\textsuperscript{19} outside of the socializing forces of work and social responsibilities. Youth cultures, thus, "are not a thread to adults"\textsuperscript{20} but a means to bridge the dependency of childhood and the responsibility of adulthood.\textsuperscript{21}

Despite the fact that subcultural developments lose interest and influence and eventually fade while the youth enters adulthood many of the cultural resources created by young people remain and become part of the dominant culture or even lead to cultural change. In fact, many subcultural developments and features of youth have through mass media and the process of globalization been amalgamated to a world wide pop(ular) culture. In our western societies youth culture has at least become the dominant informer and shaper of the dominant culture. One might even say that in our days "youth culture has become the dominant culture."\textsuperscript{22}

**The Generations—A Socio-Cultural Phenomenon**

It is evident that the rise of youth culture is also a manifestation of a new process of social segregation. Although in the course of industrialization and urbanization as well as the consolidation of the national states and citizenship the social classes have been drawn together more closely (consensus and embourgeoisement), the segregation of society now happens more among the age groups or generations.

\textsuperscript{15} It should be noted in this respect that for instance "music has always been adopted by the initial subcultural style, it has never started the movement" respectively the cultural trend. Garratt, 151.
\textsuperscript{16} Garratt, 151.
\textsuperscript{17} Bucholtz, 537.
\textsuperscript{18} John Clarke et al., 15.
\textsuperscript{19} Brake, 166.
\textsuperscript{20} Garratt, 152.
\textsuperscript{21} There are of course also subcultures with distinct destructive and delinquent expressions. But in principal, youth subcultures are to be seen as a response of young people to the experience and expectations of 'their world'.
\textsuperscript{22} Oestreich, 65.
The generational segregation is fostered by the growing separation of youth from the adult life, the acceleration of cultural and technical inventions and developments, socio-political and economic turmoil (times of war, economic depression, social revolution), and the growing influence of the mass media. Although some generational differences did exist throughout history the differences between the youth and the adult generations increased due to those more rapid cultural changes since the modern and especially late modern era. As a consequence there is a new phenomenon namely that each generation especially during its most receptive period of life (childhood and youth) gets coined by their actual dominant culture, their contemporary socio-historical events and their actual way of and attitude to life. Thus, each generation forms a population cohort since they do not only share similar years of birth but they share also a common set of developmental experiences including social and cultural experiences and a distinct set of values that differ to a considerable extent from the previous generation. According to Howe and Strauss these are the three basic attributes to identify the persona of a generation: “Perceived membership in a common generation; common beliefs and behaviors; and a common location in history.” Social scientists are thus interested in the study of birth or age cohort effects regarding generational changes.

Although there is a danger of constructing generational gaps by forming generalizations about entire groups of people and attributing common characteristics to them it is widely agreed that in our time “four key generations” can be identified which are the Veterans, Baby-Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials.

The Veterans are people born before the end of World War II (prior to 1946). Usually they are characterized in the following way: Veterans tend to be disciplined, respect law and order and they like consistency. Thus, they are not comfortable with change. Veterans have fixed views on the role of gender and are comfortable with a

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directive command and control management style. They highly value security, comfort, and familiar activities and environments.

The Baby-Boomers are born after World War II between 1946 and about 1960. The Boomers thus arrived during the "American High" after the War and have the largest population of any generation. The Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War have been significant to the Boomers and as the generation of 68 they rebelled against the traditional values and concepts of their parent generation. However, despite flower power and sexual freedom status, success and social standing are important. Boomers created the "workaholic" concept and were the first generation that divorced rather frequently. Boomers tend to be optimistic, ambitious, and loyal.

The Generation X was born in the sixties up to about 1980. Sometimes they are also referred to as the Busters. They have been "the first generation that is not inheriting a lifestyle superior to that of their parents." They often had both parents working and were exposed to divorce and daycare. They have thus also been labeled as the "Generation Alone." Disillusioned by the many economic, ecologic and health problems of their time they do not share the same optimism of their parents. This Generation is well educated, resourceful, individualistic, self reliant, and skeptical of authority. They have no faith in institutions and rather trust themselves. Unlike their parents they are not that interested in long-term careers, corporate loyalty or status symbols. They rather focus on community, relationships, process, their rights and skills. They work to live and not vice versa. They are seen as pragmatists with a "what’s in it for me" attitude. They are the main carrier of the so-called postmodern worldview. However, they are much more than the previous generations seen as a generation in search for meaning and purpose.

The Millennials are the generation most discussed recently since born between 1980 and 2000 they are about to enter the workplaces and the world of the adults. Following the Generation X they are sometimes also called Generation Y. Grown up in a

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26 Howe and Strauss, 47.
media and technology driven world they are very technology wise and are ‘multitaskers’. They embrace diversity like their parents Millennials are highly relational, are teamworkers, have feelings of abandonment, are confused regarding the purpose of life, and they accept change as a constant in life. Their choices are based on changing criteria and they find meaning in controlling useful information. They are prescribed as confident, happy and optimistic. Regarding their values Millennials are also often labeled as “neotraditionalists” since they highly value family and stability, are looking for strong morals and values as well as ideals to believe in. Millennials are seen as reacting against the larger media promoted culture. There is a feeling of being saturated by greed, sex, and all the decadent forces in our western culture. As “spiritual questers” Millennials are interested in spirituality and there is in fact “an emergent interest in religious traditions and the conventional morality that often accompanies it.”

Despite the fact that recent empirical studies reveal that the often strongly stereotyped characteristics of a birth or age cohort suggest generational differences that in reality “are less strong and consistent” and that the “disparities between generations on key issues may not be nearly as wide as we are often led to believe,” the concepts of birth cohorts are helping to understand shifts in culture and values. Reaching youth with the good news of Jesus requires a sensitivity and understanding for their age cohort and actual cultural context in order to contextualize the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel.

Youth as Agents of Cultural, Social and Religious Change

Youth are not just coined by their dominant culture and thus ‘products of culture’ youth themselves have to be seen as cultural actors and active agents of cultural change. This is not only true in the light of the emergence of youth culture but cultural change lies

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30 Timothy Smith, The Seven Cries of Today’s Teens: Hearing Their Hearts, Making the Connection (Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2003), 14 and 16.
31 Timothy Smith, 17.
34 Zaino, 25.
in the very nature of youth. Several studies of the history of childhood in the past decades have shown that children and youth "were influential actors in past societies." Thus, they have to be seen as active contributors "to societal production and change while simultaneously creating their own... culture." Sociologist Anthony Esler summarizes that "in any community the presence of a large number of adolescents and young adults influences the temper of life; and the greater the proportion of young people the greater the likelihood of cultural and political change." With the publication of the Youth Supplement Generation of Change to the State of the World Population Report 2008 the United Nations Population Fund promotes the importance of young people as agents of cultural change around the world. Since young people "have the potential to become agents of change" they should be addressed and supported by specific programs. What is true on a general socio-cultural level also applies to the field of faith since religion may especially be a catalyst for positive cultural change especially when ported by young people. Recent studies even suggest that "spiritual and religious commitments are important factors in young peoples’s contributing to—and sometimes leading—social change, at the level of humanitarian concern as well as systemic political and social change"—a lesson that can also be learned from history.

Despite the fact that in medieval times up to early modern times about half of the population (at least in central Europe) has been under the age of twenty the large number of young people involved in the reformation movement is not only a demographic phenomenon but a principle one. Youth are often more ready to embrace, accept, and foster cultural, social and religious changes. This is also true for both American movements the Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening as well as other

36 Ibid.
38 Generation of Change, 42.
39 This is also suggested by the UNFPA report Generation of Change, 11.
religious movements that followed. History reveals that not only young people were the most affected by the religious revivals but the revivals themselves were mostly ported by youth and young adults.\(^{42}\) In fact, “a significant feature of any revival is the role played by young people.”\(^{43}\)

That adolescents belong to the most receptive groups of society for religious change and conversion is a given fact (see section about conversion). That a positive associated religious or spiritual identity and a faith commitment among youth may affect society positively and even foster cultural change is a challenging thought and further stresses the importance to reach young people with the Gospel of Jesus—who by his own life also was an agent of social and cultural change at his time and beyond.

Youth are not only more ready but also more capable of cultural change in both ways, intrasubjectively—changing their own cultural orientation and attitude—as well as extrasubjectively—fostering change in their dominant (adult) cultural context. Since the biblical Christianity or more profound “Christ,” as Richard Niebuhr puts it, is also a cultural factor promoting specific values, attitudes, behaviors, social groupings, etc., it is ‘offering’ adolescents an alternative, different, and transformed way of life to live within (not just in opposition to it) and beyond (not just accommodated to it) their culture.\(^{44}\)


\(^{42}\) See Reid, Evangelism Handbook, 430-433.


\(^{44}\) H. Richard Niebuhr’s work *Christ and Culture* provides a thorough discussion of the paradoxical nature and dialectical relation of faith or Christ’s way of life and human culture (steeped in sin). Niebuhr’s taxonomy of fundamental motifs to solve the paradoxon like “Christ against culture,” “Christ of culture,” “Christ above culture,” “Christ transforming culture,” as well as a Lutheran “Christ and Culture in paradox,” helps to understand that there is no simple solution that would free us as Christians and Adventists in this world from a constant wrestling with the issue.
APPENDIX J

MAJOR THEORIES OF ADOLESCENCE

As a distinct transitional time of development adolescence is characterized by important and unique changes that take place in both the biosocial as well as the socio-psychological dimensions of life. The adolescent is going through fundamental cognitive and intellectual changes and is subjected to new and disturbing sexual and maturational forces. But most important the adolescent is in a crucial stage of personality organization and faces the task to establish a self-concept that is capable of bearing his future adult life. The complexity of the developmental forces and factors have not only awaken the interest of many scientific studies but led to a multitude of interpretation and theories of adolescence.

The beginnings of developmental theory respectively psychology go of course hand in hand with the “discovery of adolescence”\(^1\) at the dawn of the twentieth century. However, it can be traced back to John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see above). Both, Locke but especially Rousseau contributed to a dawning of a pedagogical and developmental psychological revolution. Rousseau’s “Emile” can be seen as the first developmental psychological attempt in the history of occidental thinking though partially Aristotelian concepts are still alive (animal like status of the child).

**Biogenetic Theory of Adolescence**

Darwin’s theory of evolution that explains the origin of the species as a long developmental process through time put man in the context of the organic world and its development. The idea of a development from the simpler to the more complex forms of organic life did influence all further scientific thinking about the development of man and even had been applied to adolescent development as well.

\(^1\) An expression coined by F. Musgrove cited in Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 7.
The Father of Adolescent Psychology – G. S. Hall

In 1904 the American psychologist Granville Stanley Hall (1844-1924) published a two-volume work about adolescence. In the course of his publication he actually coined the term adolescence by applying it to the ‘new’ transitional stage between childhood and adulthood and popularized the concept of adolescence. But more important Hall was the first “to advance an actual psychology of adolescence in its own right and to use scientific methods in his study of adolescence.” Therefore, he has also been called to be “the father of adolescent psychology.”

Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny – Adolescence as Rebirth

Basically, his theory of adolescence is founded on the evolutionary concept of the development of life. Following Haeckel’s biogenetic law Hall held the view that human development recapitulates the evolution of species. The characteristics of a specific age correspond to a prehistoric stage in the development of the human race. According to his recapitulation theory the creeping and crawling of infants is a re-enacting of the animal stage of human development. Early childhood from about four to eight years, when children play hide-and-seek, Indians, and are eager to throw, run, dodge, hit, chase, wrestle, box, fish, and hunt, recapitulates the hunting and fishing epoch. The stubborn and unruly phase of preadolescence from about eight to twelve recapitulates the primitive animal-like era in the human evolutionary history and reflects the barbaric and savage human epoch. The time of adolescence from puberty (about twelve or thirteen) until about twenty-five is defined by Hall as some kind of new birth since “the higher and more completely human traits are now born” in this life stage. During adolescence young people are reborn leaving the animal kingdom with its selfish drives, needs and survival concerns behind and become “members of a civilized species concerned with

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2 He did, of course, not invent the term.
5 Haeckel believed that the growing fetus passes through the same evolutionary process as the development of the species and proposed a linear model of human evolution from the protozoon to the complex human organism.
social responsibility and the rights and welfare of others.” The adolescent recapitulates “a turbulent transition and physiological period in human evolution.”

Period of Storm and Stress

This rebirth is accompanied by internal struggles between self-focus and social conscience as well as by the antithetical impulses of enthusiasm and deep sentimental Weltschmerz (world weariness) that results in an intensive period of Sturm und Drang (storm and stress). Hall perceived the adolescent emotional life as an “oscillating between contradictory tendencies” and in analogy to the recapitulation theory (human transition from a rather animal stage to the civilized stage) and the German youth movement he understood it as a time of getting to know oneself and finding one’s destiny before the pressures, responsibilities and stresses of adult life arrived. From a psychological point of view Hall affirmed and fostered the idea that adolescents were neither children nor adults and “were ontologically distinct and this distinction included a penchant for trepidation revealed in odd behaviors.”

A Shelter Moratorium

Hall’s “idealization of adolescence as the beginning of a new life” that “could contribute to the evolution of the race, if it were properly administered” marshalled him to a nature oriented pedagogy that somehow echoed Rousseau’s Emile. Especially boys need the moratorium of adolescence to be sheltered from the seductions and distractions of the urban life and the cities and the separation from the other sex. Hall’s theory of adolescence and pedagogy was also very prominent and supported among the young Christian youth movements like the YMCA and Boy Scouts.

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7 Berzonsky, 12.
8 Ausbel, 10.
9 Hall refers to the German bourgeois youth movement that manifested itself especially at the turn of the eighteenth century through the literature of Schiller and the writings of the young Goethe which are “full of idealism, commitment to a goal, revolution against the old, expression of personal feelings, passion, and suffering. Hall saw an analogy between the objectives of this group of young writers… and the psychological characteristics of adolescence.” Muuss, 17.
10 Muuss, 17.
11 Root, 33.
12 Lesko, 56.
Fostering the Biological Approach

For the first time Hall identified scientifically many of the major characteristics of adolescent development which involves the sexual, intellectual, and physical development as well as specific adolescent ambivalent behavior. As the outstanding representative of the biogenetic view of adolescence Hall fostered the biological approach to adolescence that sees the psychological and behavioral changes that occur during this time of development as “completely conditioned by a series of physiological events depending on certain glands of internal secretion.” Therefore, physiological factors are completely responsible for the psychological aspects of adolescence and as such they are universal and uniform. In fact, evidence about adolescents obtained in the Western world generally seemed to support Hall’s theory of adolescence as “an extraordinarily turbulent and stressful period of life” and his portrayal of adolescence consolidated the paradigm of youth as an independent and psychologically characterized phase of development. Hall opened the scientific discussion about adolescence and the adolescent and his biological approach soon got challenged by cultural anthropologists.

Socio-Cultural Theories of Adolescence

The previous study already indicates that the biological assumption of mere and wholly physiological conditioned and thus universal and uniform phenomena of adolescence characteristics and adolescent behavior can hardly stand absolute in the light of the social history of youth. However, in the early twentieth century a history of youth had not yet been elaborated but cultural anthropologists began to study adolescents in non-Western societies and established a socio-cultural theory of adolescence or the adolescent.

Cultural Relativism - Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict

In the 1920s beginning with Margaret Mead’s (1901 – 1978) published dissertation with studies among Samoan adolescents the idea of a universal biological phenomenon of adolescence was challenged. Mead argued that youth in Samoa have.

\[14\] Ausubel, 10.
\[15\] Berzonsky, 13.
\[16\] See Fend, 42.
very little significance with the adolescent in the Western culture and have few of the problems and characteristics usually associated with the adolescent transition. Mead's scientific approach and thus her findings have been criticized in the 1980s and it has been argued by Derek Freedman that "Mead was at some level trying to please her mentor... by giving him conclusive evidence that culture, not biology, determined adolescent behavioral disturbances." However, the large body of ethnological data contributed by other scientists in the following (after Mead's publication) indicates that the experience of adolescence and specific adolescent phenomena actually vary from culture to culture. The transition to adulthood can be more or less prolonged, more or less complicated, or more or less conflicting. The new social approach emphasized the importance of social institutions, environmental and cultural factors in the process of human development. However, Ausubel points out that as the biological view the new social approach initiated by anthropologists—at least in the earlier years—was not free from overgeneralizing since it was "proclaiming that the biological changes of adolescence are unrelated to its psychological characteristics" and "that there is no distinct transitional stage of personality development that is consistent with the adolescent period itself."20

However, it seems to be an important discovery that adolescents are not just what they are by mere universal biological factors but that cultures and social contexts shape the experience and the process of the adolescent period. Further studies in this regard led to a view known as "cultural relativism" advancing the view that "the way adolescents act and the problems they experience are relative to the cultural circumstances within"

18 Côté, 3.
19 It should be noted here for later as a passing comment that according to this understanding the Church as a social institution is not without influence on the development of adolescents.
20 Ausubel, 13.
21 See Muuss, 111. Berzonsky, 13.
which they live and develop."\(^{22}\) Therefore, there is no such thing as a single cultural theory of adolescence but rather different micro-theories for the various cultures.

Stressful and Non-Stressful Cultures

Another anthropologist, Ruth Benedict (1887 – 1948), however, could show that there are rather gradual and continuous transitions to adulthood in cultures that can be denoted as "non-stressful cultures."\(^{23}\) In such cultural contexts the child is taken care of by his family and grows gradually in his social frame and is involved in the families duties from infantile dependence into a state of relative independence. Often in such cultures young people are stepping into the footsteps of the father respectively the mother, thus, assuming the same traditional role when they subsequently become adults. A continuous development is fostered when work and play for children are not strictly separate and distinct and children develop gradually from a non-responsible to a responsible status role. Thus, in non-stressful cultures it has been observed that "no basic change took place during the adolescent period; the degree of responsibility, and the amount and quality of work increased as the child grew and matured."\(^{24}\) In non-stress cultures Benedict identifies another gradual process in development which is from submission to dominance. The less sudden such a change from a submissive role to a dominant role respectively responsible position happens and the less it is postponed the less turbulent is the experience of adolescence.\(^{25}\)

Whereas the Preindustrial society of the Western world could be seen in the context of non-stressful cultures the industrialized and modern Western culture has rather become stressful regarding adolescent development and discontinuous. Prolonged conditions of nonresponsibility and submissions change by sudden shifts. Stressful cultures therefore have "a sharp break or distinction between what one does and learns as a child and the role one is expected to assume as an adult."\(^{26}\) To put it bluntly, responsible work is done by adults, young people play. In fact, as Berzonsky states,

\(^{22}\) Berzonsky, 13.
\(^{23}\) Ibid, 14.
\(^{24}\) Muuss, 113.
\(^{25}\) In this respect, trusting young people and gradually give them responsibility in the church may have a positive effect on their adolescent experience!
\(^{26}\) Berzonsky, 14.
"with most Western adolescents, instruction and education take place in artificial learning contexts—schools—which bear little resemblance to the context within which they will work as adults."\textsuperscript{27}

In Mead’s terms—in later years she identified general cultural types by focusing on social change—non-stressful cultures could be characterized as "postfigurative."\textsuperscript{28} In postfigurative cultures parents as well as grandparents function as guides for cultural stability and continuity since their general way of life is not changing and their knowledge, skills, and values are still valid. The past represents the future. Thus, Adolescents’ identity is predetermined and ascribed at birth.

Stressful cultures correspond with the "prefigurative" cultural type since they “are marked by rapid social and technological change.”\textsuperscript{29} Cultural demands, challenges, and opportunities are constantly changing so that parents are no longer able to provide the knowledge and skills that will be required for the future adult life. Adolescents thus need to be taught “how to think, how to evaluate, how to solve problems, and how to effectively adapt rather than teaching them specifically what to think, what to value, what to do, and what to believe.”\textsuperscript{30}

However, the apparent polymorphy of adolescent experiences and behaviors in different cultural contexts that had been brought into the scientific discussion first by Margaret Mead and the further awareness of various courses of adolescence in different social stratum as well as the diverse ways children grew up in different historical epochs did highlight the significance of the anthroposphere or the environmental factors for the human development. The adolescent development, therefore, is not only happening in the world but furthermore it is also influenced by the world respectively by the socio-cultural context the child grows up in.\textsuperscript{31}

**Psychoanalytic Theories of Adolescence**

Psychoanalytic theory is a “comprehensive framework that attempts to account

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 29.
\textsuperscript{29} Berzonsky, 15.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} See Fend, 129.
for virtually all aspects of human personality and behavior." Thus, it is more than a theory of adolescent development. Besides, it did not develop in the context of the emergent scientific discussion of adolescence at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it made and makes important contributions to the explanation of the adolescent experience and behavior.

Sigmund Freud’s Threefold Psychic Structure

The founder of the psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), was a contemporary of G. Stanley Hall. In respect to the human development Freud is closer to Hall and a biological view than to the socio-cultural view of the anthropologist discussion since he understands adolescence in the context of a psychosexual development that is genetically determined and relatively independent of environmental factors. The mature human personality and all human behavior is determined by the interplay of the three different psychological structures Freud calls “id”—the basic urges, drives and human needs that operates according to the pleasure principle—the “ego”—the thinking driven instance that controls, regulates, rationalizes, and inhibits actions and behaviors following the reality principle—and the “superego”—that consists collectively of the standards, values, restrictions and principles adapted from the social and cultural environment functioning as moral authority. The “ego” is “the executive of personality” that controls the different forces of the “id” and the “superego” and serves as the central and integrative instance.

The “superego” is made up of two aspects, the conscience and the “ego ideal.” The conscience deals with restrictions and prohibitions telling what one should do. Thus, it is connected with the feeling of guilt and remorse. The “ego ideal” deals with goals and ideals telling what one ought to aspire to and how one ideally should act. Thus, it is connected with shame and inferiority feelings. According to Freud the “ego ideal” forms during puberty respectively adolescence and is the leading motive the “ego” measures

32 Berzonsky, 15-16.
33 Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 24.
against, to which it aspires, and which demands it is aiming to meet more and more perfectly.34

The psychoanalytic theory understands humans as individualistic and selfish but still in need of social living. Thus, people are in a constant conflict between the two central forces represented by the “id” and the “superego.” “On the one hand, they want to maximize their instinctual gratification—the id. On the other, they must learn to do so in socially sanctioned ways to avoid punishment as a social being.”35

Libido as Driving force of Human Development

The driving force behind all psychic developments is the psychic energy called libido which is more than just sexual desire. During human development the libido shifts and by this causes psychic developments. During infancy the child is almost purely driven by the “id” and the libido that is during this stage focused on the oral part. Freud thus calls infancy the oral stage. With the toddler years the child enters the anal stage where the libidinal focus is on voiding and withholding fences and where the small child begins exercising self-control (including toilet training). By that the “ego” emerges to regulate the impulsive nature of the “id.” The next developmental step is the phallic stage where children are said to experience the Oedipal complex (for girls the Electra complex). The libido drives the child to the desire to possess the opposite-sex parent but he or she is simultaneously threatened by the same-sex parent which hinders the child to attempt its goal. Through the process of introjection the child identifies with the same-sex parent and attempts to become like the father respectively the mother. Through this identification process with the same-sex parent the “superego” emerges. The following preadolescent stage Freud calls the stage of latency since all three personality forces have emerged and a relative balance is established by the partial sublimation of the libido through socially accepted channels. However, with puberty the relative balance is disturbed and the genital stage marks the beginning of the adolescence. Whereas the aim of the libido during childhood was mainly pleasure-seeking pubescence creates a new

34 The ego ideal is the Leitvorstellung “an dem das Ich sich misst, dessen Anspruch auf immer weitergehende Vervollkommnung es zu erfüllen bemüht ist.” Freud cited in Rolf Göppel, Das Jugendalter – Entwicklungsaufgaben, Entwicklungskrisen, Bewältigungsformen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 17.
35 Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 24.
aim, namely reproduction. Puberty, therefore, re-energizes the “id” and the libido is directed away from the objects of childhood (including parents) towards people outside the family usually towards peers. This change of object in the libido is the center of the psychic development during adolescence since it also initiates the emancipation from parental authority. As a consequence of the detachment from the parents the “ego ideal” emerges since the contents of the “superego” were mainly determined by the parents and have to give way to self-determined values and ideals.

The Adolescent Crisis

Due to the fundamental change of the drive structure and a reorganization of the social or relational structure initiated by biological forces adolescence is defined as a time of internal conflicts and tensions. Although Freud did not put much weight in his theory on the adolescent experience since he was convinced that early childhood experiences are far more crucial many of his followers further elaborated and modified his basic assumptions. One of which was his student Siegfried Bernfeld (1892 – 1953) who focused on the sexual drive during adolescence and postulated that the many conflicts and the turmoil of youth are caused by an accumulation of the sexual drive by social norms. Anna Freud (1895 – 1982), Freud’s daughter, concentrated more on the adolescence than her father and specifically emphasized the dynamics of the process of restructuring the personality on a more personal or individualized basis through a period of storm and stress. This process is indicated by emotional turmoil and initiated by pubescence that terminates the latency period during which the childish sexual drives have been successfully repressed and redirected into other areas of interest and activities (play, hobby, sports, school, etc.).

According to psychoanalytical respectively Freudian doctrine adolescence has to be a stressful period. The absence of stress and storm is rather a sign of unhealthy personality development and may indicate “that adolescents are defining themselves exclusively in terms of the parental introjects acquired during childhood.”

Freud actually believed that a human being is already developed and the basic structure is laid in early years of childhood adolescence just brings out what is already there. “Der kleine Mensch ist oft mit dem vierten oder fünften Jahr schon fertig und bringt später nur zum Vorschein, was bereits in ihm steckt.” Freud cited in Göppel, 16.

Berzonsky, 18.
Submissiveness and conformity of youth, though often desired by the parents and the society, often signal a reluctance to mature and establish adult autonomy. In the center of the adolescent development respective crisis, its turmoil and conflicts, is the fight between the “id” and the “ego” whereby new sexual impulses have to be repelled and the detachment from parental bonding has to be gained.

Need for Dependence and Independence – Otto Rank

In the wake of Freudian theory, partially in accordance with Freud and partially in opposition to Freud, several enhancements and specifications of adolescent theory evolved. Otto Rank (1884 – 1939) and his followers, for instance, see the adolescent personality development not primarily in the context of the psychosexual changes but rather in “the shifting balance between the individual’s contrasting needs for dependence and independence.” In the Rankian theory not the libido is the strongest determining factor in the developmental process (the “id”) but rather its counterpart, the human will (the “ego”). Adolescent turmoil and development is thus less caused by the repressive force of the “ego” but rather by its striving force.

Stages of Adolescent Character Development – Peter Blos

Whereas Freud considered adolescence to be just one general stage of psychosexual development Blos further detailed this life phase. As an extension of the psychoanalytical model Peter Blos explored the chronological sequence of human development from childhood to adulthood and the formation of the “ego ideal” by focusing on the formation respectively the reconstruction and consolidation of the adolescent character. The basic challenges of the character formation are the second individuation process—distancing from the parents and redefining the child-parent relation, reworking and mastering childhood trauma—coping with emotional injuries that all humans experience during childhood in different degrees, ego continuity—finding a sense of personal history, establishing sexual identity—finally being able to seek

38 Ausubel, 27.
39 Blos speaks of the “second” by following Margaret Mahler’s theory of the individuation process in early childhood through which the child becomes able to differentiate himself from its surrounding and caretakers. See Jane Kroger, Identity in Adolescence: The Balance between Self and Other (New York: Routledge, 2004), 57-64.
romantic relationship outside the intimate family constellation are reby he established different adolescent stages of transition since the development of a child to an adult happens according to Blos in several steps and not in a sudden crisis and rapid metamorphosis. Each developmental step depends on the former and proceeds in a systematic order.40

**Latency:** Following Freud Blos defines late childhood as a time of psychic consolidation. Driving forces are directed towards external activities. The experience of own abilities and success in school and at home establish a healthy basis to cope and process with the coming adolescent conflicts.

**Preadolescence (10-12):** The harmony of childhood is disrupted by the knell of genital sexuality like boys avoiding girls, “dirty” sex-talk, and making “dirty” jokes. In this stage girls are often stronger, psychically as well as physically.

**Early Adolescence (13-15):** In this age actual adolescence begins indicated by symptoms of regression. Life is in turmoil. Boys are showing less concern regarding tidiness and cleanliness and boorish behavior. There is also a reduction of concentrated learning. Girls show their regression less by their behavior rather by creating romantic fantasies of beauty and love. The libido is moving away from the objects of childhood and the parents towards objects outside the family like pop or movie stars. Between parents and child the cuddle phase has gone rather the child is distancing from parental love and signs of affection (especially in public).

**Middle Adolescence (15-17):** During this stage of development new psychic structures are established. Temporarily libidinal forces are directed towards an imaginary ego which is a fantasy of “the gorgeous” part of oneself. By that the forming of the “ego ideal” is signalized which is about to become the new and decisive regulation authority replacing the parent determined “superego.” The “ego ideal” is still connected and strongly influenced by the peer group identity through the adjustment to peer expectations. However, Blos argues that an autonomous “ego” evolves by answering the basic question “who am I.” The hovering libidinal driven attention between the own

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40 The following description follows the presentation of Blos’s theory by Helmut Fend. See Fend, 90-93. See also Kroger, *Identity in Adolescence*, 66-68.
sexes is more and more focusing towards the opposite sex and is looking for cathexis.  
Because of its narcissistic character in this developmental stage first love can have a rather dramatic character. Unanswered love or a broken relationship could result in a traumatic self-degradation.

_Late Adolescence_ (18-20): According to Blos this phase of adolescent development is all about the active forming of one’s own identity. Libidinal orientation is now more or less settled and the “ego ideal” is now more determined by the real ego and less by an exaggerated ideal. However, if the personal integration process does not succeed because the real ego and the ideal ego are irreconcilable or because the libido is not able to settle in a relationship with the other sex the development of the personality may be severely disturbed and result in self-destructive behavior.

_Postadolescence_ (21-25): Due to modern living conditions Blos notes that the process of identity development prolongs. During this stage of adolescence no longer the reorganization of the psychic structure is in focus but rather to establish a concept of life and concretely cope with life regarding professional career, binding relationship, parental role, and social responsibility.

Generally, Blos advocates a preferably long period of childhood and youth and not to shorten it. Children and youth need time to actually live through the respective stages. Thus, concerning the modern living conditions of western societies Blos cautions against any influences that might shorten respectively hasten the developmental processes of each stage (including early sexual activities).

**Developmental Stage Theories**

Although the different stage theories—some of which briefly presented here—do not constitute a separate school of developmental psychology they, at least partially, share some fundamental criteria of human development. Psychological stage theories of human development assume an epigenetic concept of maturation similar to the physical development of an embryo. Development is a gradual unfolding and progression from simpler to more complex levels of organization initiated by internal forces.

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41 Which means the investment of mental or emotional energy respectively libidinal forces in a person, object, or idea.

42 See Fend, 93.
Generally, developmental stage theories assume first, that the sequence of stages is invariant and that humans proceed, though at different rates, through the stages in the respective order. Skipping respectively omitting a stage is not possible in order to reach another stage of development. Second, stages describe qualitatively different patterns or periods in the developmental respectively maturation process. Third, stages refer to general patterns or characteristics. Fourth, usually the stages represent hierarchic integration. Previous stages do not necessarily disappear but become integrated or dominated by new broader frameworks. Fifth, it seems to be the logic of stage theories that they are universal and thus unfold in the same sequence in all cultures. Although, environmental influences are important stage theorists rather focus on the internal psychic forces and events.43

Stage theorists usually do not focus on just one specific period of childhood or youth but rather on the sequence and dependencies of developmental processes. More important for the task of this section are, however, the respective stages that correspond with the time of adolescence and further highlight the adolescent experience and behavior.

Cognitive Development – Jean Piaget

The Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980) was basically concerned with the cognitive development of children. Since children are constantly trying to make sense out of their environment and experiences and thus are actively constructing new and more elaborate cognitive structures Piaget sought to determine a rationale of the cognitive process that refer to the internal mental organization children use to comprehend their world. Based on the theory that human thinking develops through a constant interplay of assimilation—fitting new information or objects into existing cognitive structures—and accommodation—modifying or changing cognitive structure since they are no longer successful or effective. When an existing cognitive structure is unable to solve a problem or to make sense an unpleasant state of disequilibrium respectively a cognitive conflict occurs that normally produces cognitive

development that leads to a new state of equilibrium by the organization of a new coherent cognitive system.

Piaget identified four qualitatively different basic cognitive stages. During the sensori-motor stage (0-2 years) infants organize their physical action schemes for dealing with their immediate world. The preoperational stage (2-7 years) moves children to learn to think by using symbols and internal images. Their thinking, however, is rather unsystematic and illogical. Reality is what the child actually perceives. During the stage of concrete operations (7-11 years) the child develops the capacity to think systematically or logically but only when he is tied to actual reality and the child can refer to concrete objects and activities. The child is yet not able to reason with purely hypothetical ideas. This stage is equivalent with the preadolescent period.

Adolescence is thus characterized by the fourth stage Piaget called formal operational reasoning (from about 11 years to adulthood). This is the most crucial stage since here young people develop the capacity to think independently of concrete and observable objects in the immediate environment. Adolescents now are able to deal with a problem by considering all possibilities and to look at it from different angles. They are leaving “the real objective world behind and enter the world of ideas.” This involves the ability to think systematically in a purely abstract and hypothetical way as well as to think metacognitively (to think about one’s own thinking). The adolescent enters a “broader world” which includes the world of possibilities. In fact, reality becomes secondary to possibility. Piaget also sees during adolescence a reappearing of egocentrism, which had been predominant during early childhood. Adolescence is thus characterized as a time during which youth “attribute unlimited power to their own thoughts” and dream of a glorious future or of transforming the world. Youth like to reason or discuss about God and everything under the sun. Piaget therefore considered adolescence to be the “metaphysical age par excellence.” Thus, the formal operational stage during adolescence involves a fundamental change in cognitive structures that,

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44 For a detailed discussion of the stages see Crain, 116-134.
45 Muuss, 161.
46 Crain, 134.
47 Ibid.
48 Piaget cited in Göppel, 34.
according to Piaget, leaves childhood behind for adulthood. It seems obvious that during this cognitive stage the youth is more able to think through religious concepts that are rather abstract by nature. Roger Dudley refers to this fact when he says that “the crucial test of mature religion is the ability to abstract.”

Moral Reasoning – Lawrence Kohlberg

Lawrence Kohlberg worked with moral dilemmas to establish a rationale of moral thinking. His concept of moral reasoning can be viewed as an extension of Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. Moral development, so Kohlberg, follows cognitive development and moves from a preconventional level to a conventional and finally to a postconventional or autonomous level. Each level consists of two stages.

Moral thinking on stage one is characterized by a punishment and obedience orientation. The child simply assumes that powerful authorities hand down a fixed set of rules that have to be obeyed unquestioningly. Stage two is characterized by individualism and exchange. The child has recognized that there is not just one right view but there are different individual viewpoints. Each person is free to pursue his individual interest and things are relative. During this stage of instrumental relativism right is what meets one’s own self-interests. Morality respectively moral behavior is seen in the context of fair exchanges or fair deals. Stage one and two are preconventional since children are not yet speaking as members of society and morality is something external to themselves.

With stage three the child moves on the conventional level. The moral reasoning is no longer marked by simple deals but rather by interpersonal concordance respectively conformity. Good interpersonal relationships and feelings such as love, trust, and empathy, are the motives of good behavior. People should live up to the expectations of the family and community. On stage four, the society maintaining, the youth becomes more broadly concerned with society as a whole. “The emphasis is on obeying laws, respecting authority, and performing one’s duties so the social order is maintained.”

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50 Crain, 156.
Laws and rules have to be obeyed since if everyone just behaves according to his own set of rules society would collapse.

Although Kohlberg did not strictly associate the stages with a specific age he sees most young people on the conventional level. Ideally, adolescence would end with the transition from the conventional to the postconventional level. However, this can only happen if the adolescents “understand the relativistic nature of rules and laws, but realize the need for contractual agreements to protect individual rights.”

Social contract is the characteristic of stage five. Moral reasoning here is based on the understanding that there are different social groups within a society that have different values and the believe that they all want certain rights to be protected (for instance the human rights) and some democratic procedure for defining rules or changing laws to improve the whole society.

On stage six (which Kohlberg later calls a theoretical stage) moral reasoning has a clearer and broader conception of universal ethical principles. The principle of justice, for instance, requires an equal respect for every human being. A commitment to justice and fundamental rights may include civil disobedience. Kohlberg was pointing to the fact that many people do not move to the postconventional respectively to the autonomous level where moral values have their validity apart from the authority of a group, subculture, the society, or influential persons. This would actually suggest that many people remain on a teenage respectively a conformist level regarding their moral reasoning.

While during childhood morality or the idea of justice is rather primitive, undifferentiated, external of oneself, and yet egocentric it becomes more sophisticated and social during the adolescent years. At the end of adolescence the young people should have reached an awareness of universal values and ethical principles in order to leave conformism behind and move to an autonomous, internal controlled level of moral reasoning. Kohlberg does not specify what exactly these universal ethical principles are but from a Christian view point one is apt to point to the Ten Commandments respectively the biblical principles taught and lived by Jesus Christ. Although Kohlberg

51 Berzonsky, 25.
52 See Crain, 158-159.
53 See Goppel, 36.
argues that religion and morality are independent such a claim “is at minimum overstated”\textsuperscript{54} since morality is an essential part of religion and thus the two “cannot be clearly separated.”\textsuperscript{55}

Since Kohlberg focused on moral thinking and not moral action other scientists further explored this relationship.\textsuperscript{56} At least they could confirm that people on stage three actually base their moral actions and decisions on others’ approval. In the teenage years these others can often be the peers. On stage four the behavior is more based on agreed sets of rules and laws. In the following and especially by Carol Gilligan it was also pointed out that there are some differences between male and female morality. Male morality “is basically having a reason for a way of knowing what is right, what one ought to do”\textsuperscript{57} whereas female morality “is a type of consciousness, I guess, sensitivity... that you can affect someone else’s life.”\textsuperscript{58} Men’s morality is thus more based on rational reasoning and women’s moral reasoning rather on relational reasoning.

Although resent research is quite consistent with earlier findings by Kohlberg and others regarding moral reasoning “there is currently no consensus on the nature of moral stages in adolescents.”\textsuperscript{59} It has, for instance, been proposed that there are just three moral development levels, the personal interest stage (corresponding with Kohlberg’s stage 2 and 3), maintaining norms stage (Kohlberg’s stage 4), and the postconventional stage (stages 5 and 6).\textsuperscript{60} However, it is widely accepted that adolescence is specifically “a period of growth for moral and prosocial dispositions, cognitions, and behaviors.”\textsuperscript{61}

Identity Development Through Crisis – Erik E. Erikson

On the basis of Freud’s libidinal determined psychosexual orientation to personality development Erik E. Erikson (1902-1995) established a new developmental approach that placed greater emphasis on social environmental influences and focused on identity development. In fact, Erikson is considered to be the “first psychoanalytic writer

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item [\textsuperscript{55}] Ibid.
\item [\textsuperscript{56}] See Crain, 166.
\item [\textsuperscript{57}] Carol Gilligan cited in Crain, 169.
\item [\textsuperscript{58}] Ibid.
\item [\textsuperscript{59}] Eisenberg and Morris, 158.
\item [\textsuperscript{60}] Ibid.
\item [\textsuperscript{61}] Ibid, 157
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to enquire seriously into the phenomenon of identity formation especially during adolescence. Erikson basically sees identity development in the context of an interaction of biological or physiological elements that change as one ages (like gender characteristics, appearance, physical capacities and limitations, etc.), psychological elements that more or less remain the same across time (like unique needs, feelings, interests, etc.), and the socio-cultural milieus (like family, peers, institutions, economy). According to Erikson “optimal identity development involves finding social roles and niches within the larger community that provide a good ‘fit’ for one’s biological and psychological capacities and interests.” Although identity does not first emerge during the adolescent years and will be reshaped throughout the life span adolescence is the most crucial period for identity formation during which basic interpersonal and vocational structures for adult life are shaped. The process of identity formation proceeds through several key turning points in life and is especially in adolescence marked by a psychosocial identity crisis. The change in personality structure and adaptive effectiveness of a personal resolution of an intrapsychic conflict with its emotional and mental stress is also dependent on “the quality of the social relationship within which it occurs.” Erikson identified eight life-span stages respectively tensions or bipolar crises through which the identity development evolves.

Stage 1: Trust versus mistrust (Freud’s oral stage) is the tension that needs to be negotiated during infancy. The child’s ego first matures in a basic encounter and interaction with his nurturing and caring social world. Trust evolves as the child finds some consistency, predictability, and reliability in his caregivers’ or parents’ confident actions. According to Erikson the core ego strength of this period is hope which enables the child to move forward despite experiences of frustration.

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62 Ibid, 16.
64 Ideally, the resolution is progressive and helps the person to advance in life and identity development. Rather problematically, the resolution is regressive and thus the person moves backward to earlier stages of adjustment.
65 Berzonsky, 19.
66 For a discussion of the importance of the parents’ own confidence to establish trust in the child in Erikson’s theory see Crain, 281.
Stage 2: *Autonomy versus doubt and shame* (Freud’s anal stage) marks the identity development of early childhood. By learning to feed oneself, walk, speak, going to the toilet, and exploring the world on his own the child develops a sense of autonomy. On the other hand the child is confronted with social expectations and pressures (provoking shame) as well as with own limits (provoking doubts). The ego strength that develops through that crisis is the will.

Stage 3: *Initiative versus guilt* (Freud’s phallic stage) is the identity crisis in the preschool age (3-6 years). The child is now taking initiative, makes plans, sets goals, and perseveres in attaining them. Crisis appears as the child experiences failures or violates social taboos. Ideally the child emerges from this crisis with a strong sense of *purpose*.

Stage 4: *Industry versus inferiority* (Freud’s latency state) from about 6 to 11 years is the crisis that results from more formal instruction and training of children and their striving for approval. As children acquire tasks, skills, and knowledge they are faced with the danger of an immoderate feeling of inadequacy and inferiority. The successful resolution of this stage fostered by an encouraging and approving social environment leads to the ego strength that Erikson calls *competence*.

Stage 5: *Identity versus role confusion* (Freud’s genital stage) is the crucial crisis of adolescence especially initiated by pubescence. Physical growth, new sexual impulses, and the expanding mental power are disruptive during early adolescence. Confusion is also generated by new social conflicts, demands, and expectations (by parents, society, and peers) the youth is faced with. Because of the ‘physiological revolution’ the body image of adolescents is threatened and they become “sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are.”67 The primary task now is to establish a new sense of ego identity that enables the youth to find his place in the larger social context and order. In order to find the “real me” in the search for identity and acquire a credible self-knowledge adolescents often experiment with different roles especially among peers. Erikson sees the peer group as essential since peers help the adolescent find answers to the basic question “who am I”. In the clarification of this question the youth is especially dependent on social feedback.

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67 Erikson, cited in Muuss, 52.
According to Erikson adolescents enter a psychosocial moratorium during which the youth search for or explore meaningful identity commitments. The adolescent moratorium means “a delay of adult commitments by youth as well as a period of permissiveness by a society to allow young people the exploration time necessary to make deeper and more meaningful psychosocial commitments.”

The adolescent also has to settle the question of vocational identity and to incorporate genital maturity into his body image that enables him to enter a genuine and committed love relationship. Unwillingness or incapability to work on one’s own identity may lead to role diffusion which results in alienation and a lasting sense of isolation and identity confusion. Adolescents that develop a strong sense of ego identity “see themselves as distinct individuals and have a consistent self-image.” Since identity is neither just something given to the individual by society nor the natural product of maturation the adolescent must achieve it through sustained individual effort by drawing to resolutions to earlier stages. The search for identity involves the generation of a self-concept that links past, present and future together. When there is a loss of family and community tradition, the present is marked by rapid social change, and the older generation does not provide adequate role models identity formation for the youth is hindered. Erikson, thus, sees identity formation also as a “generational issue, pointing to the responsibility of the parental generation for providing an ideological framework for its youth.” Identity formation, thus, includes the formation of a personal ideology or a philosophy of life that is sustainable and provides orientation. In their search for values to which young people can be true they often “align themselves to political or religious ideologies.” Since adhering to one’s own values contributes a stable identity the ego strength to developed during this stage is fidelity.

Stage 6: Adulthood is reached with the intimacy versus isolation stage. If a reasonable sense of identity has been established and one is secure with one’s self-concept real intimacy and true mutuality in which one abandons oneself is possible. If

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69 Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 77.
70 See Muuss, 51.
71 Kroger, Identity in Adolescence, 19.
72 Crain, 288.
the young adult is able to establish intimacy the ego strength that develops is mature love.

Stage 7: Middle adulthood is marked by the struggle generativity versus stagnation. People strive to realize the identity they have constructed and become “concerned with generating and producing offspring, artefacts, ideas, products, and so forth that exemplify and reflect the identity they have achieved.” The ego strength to develop is care.

Stage 8: Old age or late adulthood is marked by integrity versus despair. Aware of own mortality people are engaged in a life review which may lead to despair or ego integrity that brings one at ease with one’s life, failures and successes. The ego strength growing here is wisdom.

Although Erikson built his rationale of identity formation in the context of psychoanalytical theory it has been noted that there are many parallels to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. This is especially true regarding the identity crisis of adolescence. In fact, only because the child respectively the early adolescent moves from the concrete operational thinking to a formal operational stage he becomes able to clarify his identity through self-questioning and establishing of a self-concept.

It is Erikson’s merit that the question of identity formation especially during adolescence became the focus of many other scientists in the fields of psychology, sociology, and biology (what about theology?).

Identity and Ego Development During Adolescence

In the course of rapidly changing social and cultural contexts the defining of self and identity became more and more a normative task of adolescence since a youth’s life concept or his adult identity was no longer just determined by origin, social status and family business. Besides, in a growing pluralistic society the task of adolescent identity formation has been intensified by the decline of community and tradition as well as by less clear guidelines ”in the midst of general cultural uncertainty on issues of appropriate values.” In this context and based on Ericson’s as well as Piaget’s developmental

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73 Berzonsky, 21.
74 See Crain, 296-298.
75 Kroger, Identity in Adolescence, 3.
theories the scientific interest in the processes of identity formation and self-definition emerged.

Identity Statuses – James Marcia

Following Erikson James Marcia further elaborated the identity crisis of adolescence by defining four categories of identity formation of youth which usually are referred to as identity statuses. According to Marcia the process of identity formation is determined by two major variables that lead to a mature identity, crisis and commitment. Crisis designates a period of exploration and searching for answers whereas commitment refers to a significant choice that guides the adolescent's behavior. Marcia's identity statuses propose different styles of how adolescents cope with "key defining-decisions" in the areas of vocational direction, religious values, political convictions, and sex role values. The four categories of adolescent identity statuses can be described as follows:

Identity Diffusion: This status designates adolescents who lack identity-defining commitments and are unable or unwilling to enter a "process of active self-exploration." Due to an undefined identity diffused adolescents often show low self-esteem and have feelings of inferiority, alienation, and ambivalence. Although they tend to be distant and withdrawn diffused adolescents have a high need for dependence on others to structure their lives, exhibit stereotyping thoughts and behaviors, and tend to confuse their own sense of self with that of others. Often identity-diffusers try to escape the anxiety of meaninglessness by engaging in intense and immediate experiences, are less mature in their cognitive complexity and emotional development, and are less likely to have intimate and long-term relationships.

Identity Foreclosure: Although adolescents of this category seem to be committed they just have adopted values, goals, and convictions from parents or significant others in a relative automatic way and without having engaged in a comprehensive self-exploration. They are generally normative oriented, committed to vocational and ideological values, conform to the expectation of significant others, have a strong need

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76 Kroger, Identity Development, 64.
77 For a detailed discussion of Marcia's identity statuses see Muuss, 62-69; Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 80-88; Kroger, Identity in Adolescence, 39-43.
78 Berzonsky, 21.
for social approval, and tend to be very authoritarian and unbending in their opinions. Thus, they pursue rather quiet, orderly, adapted, and industrious lives. Due to their tendency to rigid adherence to authoritarian values identity-foreclosures are the least open to new experiences and are rather inflexible and defensive. Adolescents with this identity status maintain very dependant relationships with significant others and in a group context they are less likely to establish solidarity.

Identity Moratorium: In this status adolescents are currently engaged in active self-exploration and are in the process of testing various identity-defining values and commitments. Although they maintain a stable sense of self-esteem the tension of identity struggle and answer-seeking leaves them with anxiety. Moratorium youth are highly self-directive, open to new experiences and alternative choices, but they have not yet committed themselves to well-defined goals and values. Such adolescents reveal higher levels of cognitive complexity, moral reasoning, and emotional development but they also demonstrate greater degrees of skepticism. Nevertheless, moratorium adolescents are active, appear to be comfortable with others, and are socially adept and effective.

Identity Achievement: Youth of this status “have experienced an extensive period of soul-searching” prior to making identity-defining values and commitments to an occupation, a religious belief, a personal value system, and resolved their sex role. They have a high level of autonomy and are less reliant on the opinion of others. Because of a high level of ego development these youth are secure, stable, and usually satisfied with the way they are. Achievers are rather confident, future oriented, plan more what is to come, and are more about the world. Often they function at the highest level of cognitive complexity and moral reasoning. Usually their personality suggests “a harmony between individuation and social needs for relatedness.” Identity-achievers are more likely to be involved in deep committed relationships.

James Marcia expanded Erikson's theory by focusing on the adolescent identity crisis. The identification and prescription of the four different identity statuses underline the importance of an active self-exploration and the need to make commitments. It seems

79 Berzonsky, 21.
80 Gullotta, Adams, and Markstrom, 88.
self-evident that the adolescents identity formation may be fostered and supported by the accompaniment of parents, significant others, and social institutions, including the church. Marcia’s statuses are not stages where people progress from one step to the next in a fixed sequence nor must everyone go through each state during his identity formation. Nevertheless, all adolescents will occupy one or more of these states, at least temporarily. The four statuses may therefore also refer to a loose gradual pattern of the identity formation process since it is possible that an individual moves progressively from one status to another, aiming for identity achievement. Marcia’s identity status paradigm has been widely accepted and the four statuses have been empirically validated by numerous successive studies.

Ego Development by Meaning Making – Jane Loevinger

As a former research assistant of Erikson Jane Loevinger elaborated an ego development model that emerged from empirical data and describes empirical development stages rather than the clinically derived logical stages of Erikson. Loevinger’s conviction is that the ego is a complex system including moral reasoning, interpersonal relations and conceptual complexity that develops “by advancing to increasingly more sophisticated levels of meaning-making.” Ego development, thus, is seen in the context of the individual’s search for coherent meanings in life. She has identified several stages of ego organization that may correspond with a certain age respectively life phase. Adolescents may be found in all of the following stages.

Whereas young children are still in an autistic (only concern is the gratification of own needs) and symbiotic stage (symbiotic dependence on mother or other caretakers) the ego development reaches the impulsive stage. The individual here is exploitative and self-indulgent and other people are perceived as potential sources of personal benefit. The main focus is on the satisfaction of own needs and inner controls are ineffective. Immediate reward or punishment drives the young person’s behavior.

81 See Kroger, Identity in Adolescence, 43.
82 See Kroger, Identity Development, 65.
83 Loevinger derived her theory based on a scientific sentence-completing-test.
84 Muuss, 247.
85 See Muuss, 249-
The next level of ego organization is the self-protective stage, also called the opportunistic-hedonistic stage. The individual’s primary concern is still with self and immediate gratification but self-control begins to emerge with a desire to gain control and dominance over others. Rules are recognized but the youth tries to manipulate them for personal advantages. Characteristic trait adjectives of this state are wary, complaining, cynical, manipulative, exploitative, power-oriented.

The conformist stage is typically ascribed to early adolescence since here the individual cares greatly about social approval and acceptance as well as is preoccupied with what others think of him. The sense of self depends to a great extent on the evaluative feedback of others and the youth often tries to imitate significant others to get approval. Materialistic interests as well as the need to belong to a group are characteristic. Typical traits adjectives are conventional, moralistic, stereotypical, rule-bond.

The self-awareness level is according to Loevinger a transitional stage where the individual is consciously conformist. There is a growing conscious self awareness and individuality that replaces other-imposed standards, fosters the concern with individual values, and becomes more sensitive to interpersonal interactions. The individuals introspective and self-critical capacity of this stage leads to the awareness of not living up to social rules or expectations which as a result may generate feelings of guilt and loneliness. Loevinger could show that most of the young people in the age of 16 to 26 are to be found in this stage, yet for many this stage of ego organization becomes a stable and permanent adult position. Representative trait adjectives are capacity for self-criticism, awareness of interpersonal differences and interactions, and multiple possibilities.

A further advancement in the ego development is the conscientious stage. A clearer sense of self becomes apparent and “internalized moral imperatives are becoming more important than group-sanctioned rules.”86 The ego structure here enables the individual to “filter life experiences according to individual values.”87 Established patterns of behavior are getting stronger and traits more stable. Feelings and motives

86 Muuss, 252.
87 Kroger, Identity Development, 18.
become more important in interpersonal relationships and there is a growing tolerance for different people and a growing sense of social responsibility. It would be the common ego state of late adolescents. Characteristic trait adjectives are responsible, empathic, psychologically minded, self-respecting, and conceptually complex.

Loevinger suggests another transitional stage that she called individualistic (growing respect for individuality and tolerance for different types of people) which should lead to the autonomous stage where the individual is able to tolerate ambiguity and cope with inner conflict since he or she has recognized that “conflict is an inevitable aspect of the human condition.”88 The person in this stage can deal with intra- and interpersonal conflicts by admitting them rather than by ignoring them, projecting them onto others, or by just blaming circumstances. Representative trait adjectives are complex, objective, discriminating, self-realizing, respectful of others.

The last stage Loevinger identified is named integrated and designates people with a strong personal identity who have integrated personal needs and wishes with the social reality. They take responsibility for their motives as well as their actions. Even though, or maybe actually because there is an appreciation of inevitable limitations and fallibilities the individual is willing to improve oneself and society. According to Loevinger just about one percent of the people are on the integrated level in their ego development. The characteristic trait adjectives here are wise, broadly empathic, able to reconcile inner conflicts, cherishing individuality, able to reconcile roles to find identity.

Although adolescents may be found in a wide range of Loevinger’s stages there is evidence that most youth are classified between the conformist and the conscientious stage. With increasing age, however, adolescents begin to make independent decisions and accept responsibility for their behavior and course of life. Loevinger’s theory also suggests that humans are capable of shaping a more positive destiny for themselves, if they chose to be more self-aware and take proactive steps to do so.

Identity as the Balance between Self and Other – Robert Kegan

Strongly influenced by Piaget and Kohlberg Robert Kegan understands identity formation as a constructive-developmental process that is driven by cognitive and

88 Muuss, 253.
affective growth of the individual. It can also be described as an ongoing process of meaning-making “in which the boundaries between self and other become structured, lost, and reformed.”89 Kegan suggests that this process of organizing and meaning-making passes through five distinct orders of consciousness in which the individual establishes a relative balance between the relationship of the self and the other (subject-object relation) in order to make sense of the world.

According to Kegan infancy is marked by the growth and the loss of the incorporating self. The child cannot yet differentiate the self from its reflexes and sensation and thus he or she can be seen as being rather than having the impulses and reflexes. Everything is self and there is no actual self-object relation. The infant is not consciously aware of a world separate of its self. At this point the child is not yet reached an actual order of consciousness. When a child discovers that there is a world separate from him it enters the first order of consciousness that is marked by the growth and loss of the impulsive balance. The child now is having impulses rather than just being them. The child can now separate the reflexes and impulses from the self and learn to control them. This leads to the second order of consciousness that Kegan denotes as the growth and loss of the imperial balance. The child is aware of own interests, needs and habits but also is no longer impulsively driven by them. Although the child’s needs and interests are the self he becomes more self-sufficient and is evidencing a sense of agency. However, the child cannot yet coordinate different needs or wishes of others. The child can only make meaning from an embeddedness in its own needs and interests. The next order of consciousness is usually the step into early adolescence when the child becomes able to separate its own needs and interest from the self. The self is no longer but has needs and interest and is able to reflect on them and coordinate them with those of others. The self is now more and more defined in relation to others and is “embedded in its need for another’s approval and is unable to step out of this shared reality.”90 True is, what significant others hold to be true. With middle adolescence the child idealistically enters the fourth order of consciousness that is marked by the growth and loss of institutional balance. The individual develops a sense of self-authorship where the self has

89 Kroger, Identity in Adolescence, 159.
90 Ibid, 170.
relationships but no longer is its relationships (is defined by them). The youth now has
the ability to internalize that which has been previously external (convictions, world
views, values, morals, etc.). The institutional self is though still heavily affiliated with
the larger social order and the “public arena in which one is normatively received and
recognized during late adolescence and adulthood.”

It is in the fifth order of
consciousness that the individual gradually differentiates himself from the institutional
affiliation (of larger society) and enters an interindividual balance. In this stage the self
is open to its own re-creation, to change and redefinition through ongoing interaction
with others or other systems (social institutions). The individual is able to have a career, a
religion, a nationality or another institutional affiliation rather than to be it. Thus, the
fifth order of consciousness corresponds with Kohlberg’s post-conventional stage.
According to Kegan this level of the self development is actually required to be able for a
post-conventional moral reasoning.

Each of Kegan’s stages or balances give rise to the indispensable meaning-making. According to Kegan adolescents gradually make meaning of the world from the
interpersonal balance (affiliation with significant others) in the teenage years to the
institutional balance in mid- and late adolescence (affiliation with social and cultural
institutions). With the transition to the interindividual balance an adult self is reached.
However, Kegan points out that an optimal evolvement of the self to a new balance
always happens best in holding environments (parents, social institutions) that remain in
place (granting stability and continuity) while they constantly provide both holding on
and letting go.

Adolescent Identity and the Life Story

Taking the lead in narrative psychology, Theodore R. Sarbin introduced in 1986
the “narrative principle” and argued that “human beings think, perceive, imagine, and
make moral choices according to narrative structures.”

According to narrative

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91 Ibid, 172.
92 It seems obvious that the church respectively the congregation as extended family can be such a holding
environment.
93 Theodore R. Sarbin, “The Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Psychology,” in Narrative Psychology: The
psychology any emotion or activity that a person is about to display is “dependent on the stories, the plots and the roles from the culture or subculture in which the person grew up and in which she now happens to be functioning.” McAdams argues that individual identities can be classified in the manner of narratives and that “identity is a life story.” A life story is defined as “a coherent narrative that weaves together experiences that help a person to explain how he or she came to be at this point in time.” It provides “a coherent narrative framework within which the disparate events and the various roles of a person’s life can be embedded and given meaning.” By connecting past, presence and the future the construction of a life story is crucial in the identity formation process during adolescence since it is by story that the most fundamental questions of life are answered. “In fact, the question where we are going and where we have been, and how those things are connected, is perhaps best answered via narrative.” Therefore, humans do not only participate in stories or are part of narratives they actually construct stories through which they integrate the disparate elements of their lives.

It is therefore the consensus in narrative psychology that stories play a vital role in the normative transition from childhood to adulthood and the subsequent identity formation. Since the critical task of identity formation during adolescence, as Ericson already suggested, is to gain a sense of oneself as a unique person with commitments to values, beliefs, and ideologies as well as to develop a coherent sense of past, present, and

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95 McAdams, 18.
96 Ibid.
98 McAdams, 19.
99 McLean and Pasupathi, xxi.
future it is through narratives that the individual combines the past, present, and the future to a coherent whole and an integrated understanding of the self. Narrative psychology has in fact substantiated the developmental claim "that the life story develops only in adolescence"\textsuperscript{100} and that the development of the life story in adolescence is "the epitome of adolescent identity development."\textsuperscript{101} Whereas in general the life narratives of children are rather collections of interesting stories with little or no explicit connections among each other\textsuperscript{102} and also with little connections between distant past events and their current personalities adolescents in turn, with the emergence of formal operations (see Piaget), begin "to create personal continuity in the form of globally coherent life narratives."\textsuperscript{103} However, the life story develops rather along "a linear pattern from 8 to 20 years."\textsuperscript{104}

Especially during adolescence when profound biological and social changes occur discontinuities in life are a central problem. However, by creating a coherent life story the youth becomes able to deal with the discontinuities and not only achieves a sense of identity but with that also a sense of personal continuity and self-sameness. The life story not only helps to see but pulls together different fragmented and conflicting parts of our lives and thus combines diversity, discontinuity, and instability with permanence. In reference to Paul Ricoeur the life story can be seen as "a unifying force to our identity."\textsuperscript{105} Thereby the adolescent is not only drawing from internal but especially from external resources. McAdams argues that the integration of one’s past, present, and future during the adolescent identity process is heavily dependent upon the occupational, ideological, and relational resources that are provided by the society and the culture in which the individual is embedded.\textsuperscript{106} The resources most helpful for the constructing of the life story “are, for the most part, ideological—they are beliefs and values, affirmed by

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid, 2.
\textsuperscript{102} The respective study refers to eight years old children. See Negele and Habermas, 5.
\textsuperscript{103} Negele and Habermas, 5.
\textsuperscript{105} Nelson, 203. Paul Ricoeur is an important philosophical and theological voice in the field of narrative identity. Ricouer supports the idea that the construction of a life story is necessary to mold the self and give meaning to one’s existence.
\textsuperscript{106} McAdams, 4.
societies, concerning humankind's appropriate place in the cosmos; they are the questions and answers formulated by persons throughout history in response to issues of ultimate concern.\textsuperscript{107} Since such ideological resources for the identity development of the individual have become rather rare or blurred, as a matter of fact among other things also "with the erosion of Christianity,"\textsuperscript{108} McAdams determines a fundamental problem of identity and thus of unity and purpose in our western societies. Adolescents, and especially adolescents in our western societies, need people and societal entities (like the family and the church) that provide 'ideological resources' and a meta-narrative that help the youth to integrate his or her individual past and presence in order to positively anticipate the future.

From a Christian viewpoint one could argue that the ultimate parameters and a meta-narrative necessary for the establishing of a coherent life story are provided by God's Word, Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Accordingly Nelson argues that "in the Christian view, religious narratives also tell stories about a God who is an actor in history, an ethical god who keeps faith, and whose divine narrative intertwines with human ones. These narratives provide ways of expressing or understanding religious meaning as it unfolds in the experience of the individual."\textsuperscript{109} From a theological point of view it is in the context of the narrative self and the constructing of a coherent life story not negligible to note that the narrative is in fact the dominant genre of the Bible and that the most profound biblical truths are embedded in stories.

**Social Psychological Theories of Adolescence**

Socio-cultural approaches to understand adolescence have already highlighted the fact that social environments and cultural factors shape the adolescent experience and development. Also theories of identity development stressed the fact that adolescent development is not an independent or internal but always a psychosocial process. It is therefore not surprising to see that also in the specific field of social psychology theories about adolescence emerged. Instead of focusing on internal factors and forces that drive

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{109} Nelson, 203.
human development social psychological theories rather stress external processes as the driving forces of child and adolescent development.

Field Theory – Kurt Lewin

An early representative of social psychology is Kurt Lewin (1890-1947). His “field theory”\footnote{110} is built on the conviction that the social environment is a dynamic field that impacts interactively with the human consciousness. In a psychological field or life space the person and the social context continuously and mutually influence each other. Whereas the life space of a child is limited to his immediate familial context the scope of the life space increases rapidly during adolescence and many more regions (relations to other people, social institutions, etc.) become accessible and make the life space of youth more complex. The turmoil of adolescence is thus especially caused by the promptness and the complexity of the changes in the life space of youth. During this period of transition where the boundaries of their socio-psychological field are rather diffuse adolescents have to change their group membership from the child group to the adult group which leaves them in a state of “social locomotion.”\footnote{111}

In line with socio-cultural theory Lewin sees the duration of the shift from childhood to adulthood dependant from social structures. A sudden shift or transition can be observed in rather primitive societies where the child group is not remarkably separated from the adult group. In societies where this separation is more defined the transition period gets prolonged and leads, as in our western societies, to an in-between situation of adolescents. Lewin refers to the western adolescent in such a situation as the “marginal man.”\footnote{112}

The situation of being in-between creates uncertainty. “Since the adolescent does not have a clear understanding of his or her social status, expectations, obligations, or how to cope with rejection, his or her behavior reflects this uncertainty.”\footnote{113} Lewin points out that the changing field of adolescence where the youth does not yet know the directions to specify goals leaves him or her open to constructive guidance. On the other

\footnote{110}{See Mauss, 126-139.}
\footnote{111}{Ibid, 133.}
\footnote{112}{Ibid, 136.}
\footnote{113}{Ibid.}
hand, the adolescent is also vulnerable to persuasion, seduction, and group pressure. However, "due to these uncertainties, adolescent behavior is characterized by an increased plasticity of personality that can lead to personality changes and even religious conversions."\(^{114}\)

Lewin’s field theory characterizes adolescence as a life span of transition respectively a process of change of group membership. Thereby Lewin highlights the importance of this life period. The youth enters a cognitively unstructured field that leads to relative uncertainty of behavior and the adolescent experience is especially shaped and influenced by the given socio-cultural background.

Interpersonal Theory of Adolescent Development – Harry Stack Sullivan

According to Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949) life is essentially composed by comfortable and successful interpersonal relationships. Influenced by social science Sullivan is convinced that “the self develops through the reflective appraisal of significant others.”\(^{115}\) As a consequence of this Sullivan believes that everyone has as many personalities as he or she has interpersonal relations. Relationships with others influence how the individual develops and becomes what he or she is. “People can be understood only within the context of identifiable social interaction patterns.”\(^{116}\) The key to understand adolescent behavior is thus to be seen in the youth’s interpersonal relationships with parents, peers, teachers, relatives, members of the opposite sex, meaningful adults, and other significant people. A successful transition to adulthood is generally based on mutually satisfying interpersonal actions and relationships.

In the context of Western societies Sullivan sees several developmental stages each of which characterized by a unique quality of interpersonal relationships. Infancy is coined by the mothering one, childhood by the parents respectively by the family. The juvenile era is marked by the relationships among peers and to representatives of the school. The predominant influence on the self-evaluation of preadolescents is seen by Sullivan in the relationship to a “chum”\(^{117}\)—a best friend and confidant of the same sex,

\(^{114}\) Ibid, 134.  
\(^{115}\) Muuss, 84.  
\(^{116}\) Ibid, 87.  
\(^{117}\) Ibid, 98.
age, and the same social context. Early adolescence is marked by the beginning orientation towards the opposite sex and by a wider circle of friends. Late adolescence is coined by actual love relationships and genital activity.

However, Sullivan helps to see that development always happens in the context of significant interpersonal relationships and Muuss complains that Sullivan’s theory “hardly seems to have received the attention it deserves.”118 According to Sullivan the central developmental forces are rather based on the individual’s growing ability to cope with basic feelings of anxiety and tensions caused by changing interpersonal relationships as he or she grows than on the libido (Freud), the cognitive evolution (Piaget), or caused by social crises (Erikson). Nevertheless, Sullivan’s interpersonal theory cannot fully emancipate itself thereof.

Social Learning Theory

In contrast to stage theories of adolescent development but quite in line with Lewin’s field theory social learning theorists like Albert Bandura assume that behavioral changes during adolescence are primarily determined by social and external factors that operate within a particular context. Pronounced behavioral changes during adolescence are less caused by internal maturational forces but rather by sudden changes in environmental factors like family structure, school setting, peer expectations, and various social training situations. Since Bandura sees reciprocal influences among individuals, their behavior, and the environment to foster the child’s development and learning process he questions the value of stage development theories, especially Piaget’s stages of cognitive development.119 Especially regarding adolescent development Bandura puts interindividual factors much more in focus than intraindividual processes. Bandura believes that the prototypical adolescent with turmoils and anxieties, sexual tensions, compulsive conformity, and acute identity crisis only applies to the actual behavior of about ten percent of the adolescent population and that “responsible, happy, well-adjusted, parent-respecting youth are more common than had been assumed.”120 This fact is in general the result of the well functioning modeling forces of parents, institutions

118 Ibid, 103.
119 For a discussion of the differences between Bandura and Piaget see Crain, 208-212.
120 See Muuss, 297.
and social structures. The modeling of significant others and socio-cultural forces are decisive for inducing behavioral changes. Social learning theorists like Bandura thus stress the importance of role models and modeling strategies especially during the period of adolescence. A much more potent influence than any verbalization or directive technique for change in adolescence is the modeling of desirable behavior. We will see that this basic insight is also relevant regarding evangelistic strategies to reach youth.

Ecological Model of Development – Urie Bronfenbrenner

Urie Bronfenbrenner concludes that development results “from the continuous changes over time in the way that a person matures and perceives and interacts with the immediate environment.” Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of development “takes into account both the interrelationship of the growing organism and the ever-changing social physical environment.” He emphasizes that the ecological context does not only influence the individual but the individual also influences the ecological field. This becomes especially obvious with the advent of puberty since it does not only change the adolescent but also change the interaction and communication pattern of the social and economical environment. The economical environment is divided into four interdependent, dynamic structures that fit into each other like a set of Russian dolls. Bronfenbrenner labels them the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem.

Microsystems are actual face-to-face settings of interpersonal relationships and interactions. The primary microsystem is the family closely followed by a group of friends and peers as well as other significant people in various contexts (like school, sport club, church) with whom the individual has enduring, meaningful, and personal interactions. Microsystems do change continually. The complexity of the multi-faceted Microsystems increases as development progresses.

Several microsystems constitute a mesosystem. It is composed of a network of relationships between different overlapping and interacting microsystems. Mesosystem interactions are characterized by the adolescent task to play and simultaneously

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121 Muuss, 314.
122 Ibid.
participate different roles in various contexts. Playing different social roles especially during adolescence is crucial since “roles have a transformative effect on the developing adolescent as well as on all those with whom he or she interacts.” A strong mesosystem in an adolescent’s life is marked by many linkages between existing microsystems. On the other hand, impoverished mesosystems have few or even no meaningful connections between the multiple microsystems of an adolescent. An impoverished mesosystem in an adolescent’s life has the danger of alienation in society since life of the youth becomes highly compartmental. Bronfenbrenner sees another potential danger in a mesosystem when multiple microsystems endorse divergent values, beliefs, and ethical standards. “When basic values between different Microsystems diverge, tensions develop in the mesosystem that can pull the individual’s loyalties in different directions” and “produce interpersonal stress because the adolescent has to make choices between different sets of microsystem values or has ‘to pretend’ to follow both or change his behaviors, attitudes, and values as he or she moves from one microsystem (home) to another (peer group).” According to Bronfenbrenner a third danger exists when the mesosystem is marked by a highly pronounced age segregation. Less or weakened linkages between adults and peers also weaken the transformative effect of various roles (there are simply less different roles to play in the mesosystem) for the youth and adolescent problem behavior seems to be more pronounced.

The larger community setting in which the adolescent lives constitutes the exosystem. It consist of social institutions, political and business bodies that have a direct or indirect influence on the life of an adolescent although the adolescent himself does not directly participate in these exosystem institutions and their process of decision making. Such exosystem influences that may impoverish or enrich the quality of the adolescent micro- and mesosystem can be the parents workplace, neighborhood groups, school boards, local government, churches, industries, public transportation, mass media, etc. At some point in life parts of an exosystem can become part of the adolescents mesosystem

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123 Muuss, 325.
124 That may be the case for instance when parents do not know the adolescent’s friends or when the friends do not attend the same school or church as the youth, and so on.
125 Muuss, 327.
for instance when he or she is elected into a decision making board or if the young person participates in community affairs.

The macrosystem is characterized by the overarching pattern of the subordinate systems that contains the "societal ground plan for the ecology of human development."\textsuperscript{126} This includes cultural patterns and values, religious tradition, public policy, the constitution, the law, the political and legal system, social class, national economy, and others. Through societal and legal measures the macrosystem also determines who is an adult and who is not. Changes in the macrosystem generally happen slowly.

Bronfenbrenner helps us to see the adolescent as being rooted in layers of social environments each of which influencing the development of the youth and in turn also as more or less being influenced by the youth. The reciprocal relationship between the developing adolescent and the multiple systems highlights the fact that adolescent "development occurs in context and context determines development."\textsuperscript{127}

Developmental Contextualism – Richard M. Lerner

The importance of context and a systemic understanding of adolescent development are also supported by Richard M. Lerner’s developmental contextualism. Lerner completely lets go of the idea that human and especially adolescent development can be generalized or described by laws, rules, or specific stage patterns. He rather emphasizes plasticity in human nature as well as individuality. With the concept of relative plasticity Lerner highlights the individual’s ability to change relatively easy throughout the course of life. However, Lerner also recognizes that children and adolescents are much more malleable than people in higher ages. Nevertheless, plasticity is not only a human capacity but rather a human necessity since change is a fundamental feature of life and, thus, of development. Plasticity involves the idea that individuals are shaped by their contexts and contexts are shaped by individuals. Lerner’s developmental theory is a systemic approach that emphasizes "the complex and multileveled interconnections between individual and context."\textsuperscript{128} Since everything determines and is

\textsuperscript{126} Muuss, 330.
\textsuperscript{127} Gullotta, Adams, Markstrom, 10.
\textsuperscript{128} Muuss, 345.
determined by everything in a constant changing interconnection diversity must be in the center of developmental research. Eventually, everyone is affected differently by changing contexts and reacts differently. Therefore, Lerner establishes a *goodness-of-fit* concept. It means that the outcome of the interaction between an individual and his context is especially dependent on the congruence or match between these two. "If there is a good fit, meaning that the individual characteristics are congruent with the characteristics or demands, or are compatible with the expectations of significant others, then the positive adjustment results enhances development."\(^{129}\) Thus, development, change in behavior, or the assimilation of values and beliefs is best achieved when an adolescent’s characteristics of individuality fit the demands of a particular setting or context. Therefore, a child or an adolescent has generally to be seen as an individual and individual strategies are needed to foster development and change.

According to Lerner’s developmental system theory the interrelated influence between the individual and the context regulates the developmental process by mutual adaption. An adaptive developmental regulation is established “when these bidirectional influences maintain or advance the health or the well-being of both,"\(^{130}\) the individual and the related social contexts. A healthy development involves positive changes in the interrelation of an adolescent—who not only is able to contribute positively to self, family, and the wider community but who is also committed to doing so—and a community that supports the development of the youth. Positive youth development supported by community in such a mutual relationship results in the growth of *functionally valued behaviors*, the development of the “five Cs,” which are competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (or compassion).

The individual’s positive development is further nurtured by the societal, cultural, and communal vision of “idealized personhood”\(^{131}\) or positive adulthood towards which the individual is moving throughout time. The path of life towards positive adulthood is then marked by the “sixth C,” which is the individual’s positive contribution to self,

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\(^{129}\) Ibid, 353.


\(^{131}\) Lerner et al., 62-63.
family, others, and, finally, civil society, or the attainment of *structurally valued behaviors*. If a youth is involved across time in such healthy, positive vice versa relations with his or her supportive community and is on his or her way towards ideal adulthood Lerner calls him or her to be *thriving*. The positive "interdependency between person and context"\(^{132}\) is thus fostering thriving as well as the individual’s well-being. Lerner’s developmental system theory and contextualism provides a very helpful framework for the understanding of a positive adolescent development and prevents us from simple cause and effect explanations in human developmental theory. Society, community, and social institutions as well as the interconnected individual him- or herself play an active role in the developmental process and thriving towards idealized personhood that involves both, the growth of functionally (five Cs) and structurally (sixth C) valued behaviors.

\(^{132}\) Lerner et al., 63.
Although the issues of religion, faith, and spirituality have been important cultural, social and personal shapers influencing the environment, the life space as well as the individual’s world-view and self-conception these issues have rather been disregarded by social and developmental psychology of childhood and adolescence so far. At the beginning of the last century such pioneers of social sciences like William James, G. Stanley Hall, or Edwin Starbuck, still considered religiousness and spirituality to be integral to their fields of study but these issues have been “marginalized throughout much of the 20th century.” This might surprise since it has been acknowledged by many scientists discussed so far in this section that religion and faith are definitely serious factors regarding identity formation, establishing a personal value system and world-view, moral reasoning, constructing a life story, fostering the youth’ meaning-, commitment-, and decision making. Nevertheless, the status of religion, faith, and spirituality within the scientific field of psychology including developmental science is described by Hill as “precarious” and there are actually “a relatively small number of credible contributors to the field.” One of the most influential contributions to the discussion of faith in psychological and developmental science comes from James W. Fowler.

Stages of Faith – James Fowler

Nelson considers James W. Fowler’s faith development theory as “the most influential theory related to religious and spiritual development.” Dedicated to the structural tradition of developmental psychology and strongly influenced by his former colleague at Harvard Lawrence Kohlberg as well as by the work of Piaget and Erikson

3 Hill et al., ibid.
4 Nelson, 231.
Fowler elaborated a structural framework "for understanding the evolution of how human beings conceptualize God, or a Higher Being and how the influence of that Higher Being has an impact on core values, beliefs, and meanings in their personal lives and relationships with others."  

The Human Need and Capacity for Faith

Fowler’s stages of faith are based on a generic understanding of faith and the conviction that faith is a common feature of human beings and “foundational to social relations, to personal identity, and to the making of personal and cultural meanings.” Faith in a more universal sense is based on the human quest for meaning and on the fact that every individual needs purpose and priorities. Therefore humans need to have “some grasp of the big picture” and are looking for something to love that loves us, something to value that gives us value, something to honor and respect that has the power to sustain our being. Thus, Fowler assumes that “as human beings we have evolved with the capacity and the need for faith.” Thereby faith does not mean to be “religious in its content or context.” Faith is actually “deeper and more personal than religion” and more than beliefs. Fowler understands faith a verb and thus as an “active mode of being and committing.” It involves an “alignment of the will, a resting of the heart, in accordance with a vision of transcendent value and power, one’s ultimate concern.” Following Richard Niebuhr Fowler also sees faith as being everywhere “a relational matter” and “always takes place in relationships.” As an existential orientation faith is “formed in our relations with others” and it “links us, in shared trusts and loyalties, to

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6 Ibid, 36.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid, 5.
10 Fowler, Stages of Faith, 4.
11 Ibid, 9.
12 Ibid, 16.
13 Ibid, 14.
14 Ibid, 33.
15 Muuss, 266.
each other, to shared values, and to a transcendent framework of meaning and power.”

Since no one is alone or solitary in his or her faith and faith also involves trust in and loyalty to other persons “faith is covenantal in structure.” The triadic covenantal structure of faith involves also trust in and loyalty to images and realities of power respectively trust in and loyalty “to transcendent centers of value and power.” Thus, as an existential, integral, and centering process faith gives “coherence and direction to person’s lives,” links them in “shared trusts and loyalties with others,” grounds their “personal stances and communal loyalties in a sense of relatedness to a larger frame of reference,” and enables people “to face and deal with the challenges of human life and death, relying on that which has the quality of ultimacy in their lives.” In this sense faith is inseparably tied to the formation and development of the self and human identity.

The actual faith orientation of the individual and the content of his or her faith are first shaped by the centers of value which are “the causes, concerns or persons that have consciously or unconsciously the greatest worth to us;” further by the images and realities of power we hold and “with which we align ourselves to sustain us in the midst of life’s contingencies;” and finally by the individual’s construction of a master story which serves as a guiding compass in one’s life, incorporates the fundamental values, and helps to “interpret and respond to the events that impinge upon our lives.”

The Stages of Faith

Although Fowler established a complex stage theory of faith development it corresponds only partially with chronological and biological maturation of the individual. Not everyone may reach more advanced faith stages and thus age is not an automatic drive that moves people to a higher level. Despite, Fowler gives some rough age indications for each stage.

18 Fowler, Stages of Faith, 33.
19 Fowler and Dell, 36.
20 Fowler, Stages of Faith, 276.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid, 277.
The first stage, sometimes referred to “stage 0,” is *primal faith* (or undifferentiated faith). Fowler calls this stage also a “pre-stage” since it is largely inaccessible to his kind of empirical research. It encompasses the age of infancy and is “a prelanguage disposition” where the trusting and loving attachment between the infant and his or her caregiver respectively parent is the central experience. Therefore the infant’s stage of faith development is comparable with Erikson’s definition of “basic trust.” The trusting disposition enables the child to overcome or offset the anxiety that results from early experiences of separation and is formed by combining experiences of “body contact and care; vocal and visual interplay; ritualized actions associated with early play; feeding, and tending; and the development of interpersonal affective attunement” in the relation to the child’s caregivers.

The following *intuitive-projective faith* of toddlerhood and early childhood is influenced by the child’s mastering of language which helps greatly in the process of meaning-making. Because of the child’s capability of more sophisticated communications about self and objects in his world “we see the emergence of a style of meaning making based on emotional and perceptual ordering of experience.” Various experiences of power and powerlessness at this age “orient children to a frequently deep existential concern about questions of security, safety, and the power of those on whom they rely for protection.” At this stage of faith development the child constructs and reconstructs events and life experiences “in episodic fashion” and constructions of faith are still largely unimpaired by logical thinking related to images and symbols that contribute to the child’s master story. During this stage “the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions and stories of the visible faith of primally related adults.” In this period “representations of God take conscious form”

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23 See Muuss, 270.
26 See Fowler and Dell, 37.
27 Ibid.
28 Fowler and Dell, 38.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 133.
and long-lasting emotions in faith orientation and regarding the images of God are coined—both for good or for ill.33

The second stage of faith development is called by Fowler mythic-literal faith. Typically it is reached in middle childhood but can go beyond. Based on the emergence of concrete operational thinking (see Piaget) and the ability of logical reasoning the child is able to more clearly separate reality from fantasy, imagination, and make-believe (e.g. there is no Santa Claus) as well as more clearly understand cause-and-effect relations. In this stage the child structures the ultimate environment or God’s rule and control of the world “along the lines of simple fairness and moral reciprocity.”34 Goodness is rewarded and wrong doing is punished. The episodic quality of the previous stage now gives way to clearer narrative constructions of life and cosmic conceptions in the process of meaning-making. Symbols, concepts, in “cosmic stories”35 are concrete, literal, and central actors, especially God, are anthropomorphic. The narrative quality of the mythic-literal faith carries but also limits meaning since people of this stage (which may include adults who permanently persist in this stage) do not “carry out extensive analytic or synthetic reflection on their stories.”36 However, because of the rather simple concept of cosmic moral retaliation people at this stage may temporarily or permanently give up their belief in a God based on the life experience that bad things happen to good people.

Early adolescence is identified as the proper age of the third stage, the synthetic-conventional faith. The formal operational thinking emerging at this age (see Piaget) opens the way for “reliance on abstract ideas and concepts for making sense of one’s world”37 and finding purpose. The cognitive revolutions at this time of life and the growing ability for mutual interpersonal perspective taking make the adolescent also capable of self-reflection and enable him or her to reflect on past experiences examining them for meaning and pattern. Further, concerns about the adolescent’s future, identity, career and vocation as well as personal relationships become important. The “synthetic” aspect of this faith stage means that the adolescent is now attempting to put together the

33 See also Fowler and Dell, 38.
34 Fowler and Dell, 39.
35 Fowler, Stages of Faith, 149.
36 Fowler and Dell, 39.
disparate aspects of his or her life into an integrated identity. Identity and personal interiority are absorbing concerns. Therefore faith “must provide a basis for identity and outlook.”38 The ultimate environment is structured in interpersonal terms and conceptions of God are more centered on ideas of acceptance, love, understanding, and support during times of crisis. The adolescent’s “personal relationships with significant others correlate with a hunger for a personal relationship to God in which we feel ourselves to be known and loved in deep and comprehensive ways.”39 The conventional aspect of this stage relates to the fact that the individual is still dependent on the expectations, judgments and approvals of significant others in order to find conformation and clarity about one’s identity and meaning to them. This stage of faith development is thus rather a conformist stage since the concepts, values, and beliefs held by the individual are largely derived from significant others or a group of significant others and often are not a matter of own critical reflection. Fowler argues that religious institutions (churches, congregations, etc.) tend to consolidate this stage of faith development since they work best with a majority of Stage 3 people. Therefore, they “reinforce a conventionally held and maintained faith system, sanctifying one’s remaining in the dependence on external authority and derivative group identity of Stage 3.”40 However, the danger is that the young person or the adult on this stage “can remain trapped in the ‘Tyranny of the They’—that is, an overdependence on the mirroring and evaluations of influential significant others.

Progressing to the next stage of faith development, the *individuative-reflective faith*, is often a protracted affair and the process corresponds with the development of a coherent sense of self-identity ideally in late adolescence. The transition to Stage 4 is thus characterized by “an interruption of reliance on external sources of authority” and “a relocation of authority within the self”—which Fowler denotes as the emergence of an *executive ego.*”41 This often occurs as a painful process of critical questioning, reevaluation, and “reexamination of deeply held beliefs.”42 At this stage of faith

40 Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 178. See also page 164.
42 Fowler and Dell, 41.
development the individuals concern is to translate symbols and beliefs into conceptual meanings. However, the testing and questioning my not result in a rejection of familiar and traditional beliefs, concepts, and practices, “but if they are retained, they are held with more self-aware clarity and intentional choice.”

The fifth stage is called conjunctive faith. At this stage the reflective adult accepts, appreciates, and combines multiple perspectives and acknowledges that seeking truths is multidimensional and dialectic task. Stage 5 is characterized by an open-minded attitude towards other beliefs or cultural and religious traditions. People at this stage believe that dialogue with different others may also deepen and enrich own beliefs and traditions. Furthermore, “this stage,” so Fowler, “makes sense out of paradoxes” like, for instance, that the concept of an all-powerful God and the idea of the human free will consequently includes the idea of divine self-limitation.

With the universalizing faith of the final Stage 6 Fowler describes a rather idealistic equilibrium that is reached by very few in a mature adult age. Whereas in previous stages and life phases the individual was deeply concerned in preserving the self this is now no longer a primary interest in life. The self is rather subordinated to a larger personal commitment with a selfless motive and a passion for justice, charity and goodness to all human beings regardless of any otherness (nationality, religion, social class, gender, political ideology, etc). “Evil of all kinds is opposed nonviolently, leading to activism that attempts to change adverse social conditions as an expression of that universal regard for all life that emanates from God’s love and justice.” Among the few that reached this stage Fowler sees for instance Mahatma Ghandi, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King.

However, Fowler’s concept of western and rather Christian faith maturation seems to follow closely cognitive maturation and ego development. Thus the faith stages correspond in many respects with those of Piaget, Kohlberg, and to some extend also with Erikson or Loevinger (see above). The closeness of Fowler’s faith development

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43 Fowler and Dell, 41.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Fowler’s angle of faith is obviously based on traditional Christianity and a western culture that highlights individuality rather than communal identities.
theory to other developmental concepts highlights the fact that faith, as defined by Fowler, is a universal, multidimensional, and integral aspect of human existence. Fowler’s theory suggests that there is a reciprocal interrelation between cognitive, moral, ego and faith development.

The transition from one stage to the next is pictured by Fowler as a pattern of expanding and rising spirals. Each spiral stage “marks the rise of a new set of capacities or strengths in faith.” Thereby each spiral overlaps with the previous one since faith has to deal with recurring major life issues in the course of a life time and at a new level of complexity. Each successive spiral stage is also seen to be linked to the previous one and does not simply replace it. Every stage adds to and recontextualizes “previous patterns of strengths without negating or supplanting them.” An outward movement of the spirals to the right and then back to the left indicates that faith development moves toward increasing individuation that culminates with Stage 4 and then doubles back in the following stages towards the participation and oneness with others as in the previous stages but on a more complex and differentiated level.

Faith Development is an Adolescent Issue

The truly major transitions in Fowler’s faith development theory are generally experienced during adolescence. This includes the transition from Stage 2 to 3 where the youth establishes more extended mutual interpersonal relationships, seeks the approval of significant others and similarly finds meaning in an interpersonal concept of a loving, accepting, and supporting God. The more fundamental transition from Stage 3 to 4 in late adolescence is marked by the transformation of a received and conformist faith into an autonomous, personal, internalized, and existential belief system.

Based on Fowler’s faith development theory John Westerhoff has paraphrased the faith journey of young people in more popular terms by defining four levels. The first is described as experienced faith during childhood. Religious acts of the parents are imitated and learned according to the motto: “This is what we do. This is

47 See Fowler, Stages of Faith, 275.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 See Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith?
how we act.” The second, affiliative faith, is characteristic for early adolescence, where belonging to a group becomes more important. One’s faith, however, is still centred around imitating what the group does. "This is what we believe and do. This is our group/church.” The third level is searching faith during adolescence. It is characterised by asking the question, "is this what I believe?” The youth will not blindly accept what others say or belief, but rather needs to find certainty for himself. Also Westerhoff detects in adolescence the most crucial time since this questioning stage can lead in different directions. Will the questioner reject the faith he is grown up with respectively remain in an affiliated status or will he move onto the next stage of faith? The next level now is owned faith reached in early adulthood. Owned faith is the strong, personal faith that one lives by, witnesses to and is deeply committed to.

At this point we could also refer to Bailey Gillespie’s more differentiated faith situations. However, all these faith developmental theories make clear that especially during adolescence it is crucial for the young person to make faith personal through thorough reflection, critical evaluation, asking questions, finding new meaning in the belief system, reinterpreting some aspects as the youth even more discovers the world and himself, and through rejection of some aspects of childhood faith. Based on Fowler’s theory Muuss concludes that “faith development is an adolescent issue par excellence.”

**Spiritual Development and Adolescent Well-Being and Thriving**

Although the scientific study of faith development—respectively the discussion in recent years rather moved towards religious or spiritual development—“is still marginalized” in the field of social and developmental psychology, there is, nevertheless, a growing attention to this field of study since there is a growing evidence

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51 Gillespie suggests a sequence of faith situations and religious development starting with borrowed faith (early childhood) followed by reflected faith (middle childhood), personalized faith (adolescence), established faith (later youth), recorded faith (young adulthood), reflective faith (middle adulthood), and resolute faith (older adulthood). See V. Bailey Gillespie, *The Experience of Faith* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1998).

52 Muuss, 277.

that spirituality is a vital resource in the developmental process of young people from childhood to adolescence and beyond.⁵⁴

Spirituality and Religiousness

Historically, human spirituality has ever been a central life shaping force in human existence. Spirituality and religiosity can even be seen as unique human characteristics. Lemer points out that, actually, “spirituality and religiosity are the only mental and behavioral characteristics that are distinctly associated with human beings.”⁵⁵

Spirituality and religiosity are key instances regarding the human desire to understand oneself, one’s place in the world, as well as finding answers to the broader human questions: Why am I here? What is the meaning or purpose of my life? Why is there evil and suffering? Such questions are especially essential in the adolescent’s process of identity formation and meaning making. From a cognitive science perspective spiritual development is seen as “an integral part of normal, human cognitive-developmental mechanisms and processes.”⁵⁶ Robert Coles’ study of the spiritual life of children seems to support this fact since he found that “many children who never went to church, the synagogue, and never have been exposed to formal religious teachings nevertheless pondered the same concerns about their futures and the meaning of their lives.”⁵⁷

Johnson and Boyatzis thus conclude that “from early on human beings are naturally spiritual, as we are oriented toward expanding our sense of meaning and value in connecting ourselves to a wider reality, beyond the perceptually given.”⁵⁸

It has been recognized that though spirituality and religiousness are key factors in human development they need to be defined and conceptionalized for further scientific study. Generally, religion is defined today in terms of worldview (everyone “has confessed or concealed answers to the questions which underlie every form of

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⁵⁴ See Roehlkepartain et al., 11.
⁵⁵ Lerner et al., 60.
⁵⁷ In his chapter “Secular Soul Searching” Coles reports several discussions with secular children about deep life questions during his 30 year study as a psychiatrist. Coles states that he has worked with non-religious children “who ask all sorts of interesting, even stirring questions about the nature of this life, and who can be heard sweating over and playing with ideas that are clearly spiritual in nature—wondering about the meaning of life, expressing their own sense of what truly matters.” Robert Coles, The Spiritual Life of Children (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 278. See also Rew, 66.
religion"59) and certain activities or as ‘a way of life’ that ultimately encompasses in a wider sense doctrines, beliefs, rituals, and institutions.60 Spirituality on the other hand can be seen in a broad sense as the living reality of religion or “the search for the sacred”61 and as such spirituality “is the heart and soul of religion, and religion’s most central function.”62 Spirituality takes the individual “beyond ordinary daily experience and has a transforming effect on our lives and relationships… it involves a search for higher values, inner freedom, and things that give life meaning.”63 Having analyzed 31 definitions of religiousness and 40 definitions of spirituality in social scientific writings Scott synthesized nine content categories of spirituality which are “experiences of connectedness; behavioral responses to something sacred or secular; systems of thought or sets of beliefs; traditional institutional or organizational structures; pleasurable states of being; beliefs in the sacred, the transcendent, and so forth; attempts at or capacities for transcendence; and concerns with existential questions or issues.”64 Hill et al. have thus highlighted the importance of spirituality for the scientific study in various fields as well as its multidimensional character and general positive influence in the lives of people.65 They have noted that religion and spirituality inherently involve development across the lifespan, social-psychological phenomena, cognitive phenomena, affective and emotional phenomena, and personality.66

Based on these insights Benson, Roehlkepartian, and Rude define spiritual development as “the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including

58 Ibid, 220.
59 Paul Tillich, “Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions,” in Ausgewählte Texte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 420. “The outside observer is always an inside participant with a part of his being, for he also has confessed or concealed answers to the questions which underlie every form of religion. If he does not profess a religion proper, he nevertheless belongs to a quasi-religion, and as a consequence he also selects, judges, and evaluates.”
60 See Nelson, 3-8.
62 Ibid.
63 Nelson, 9.
64 Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott, 894.
65 See Hill et al., 51-77.
66 Ibid, 53-54.
the sacred. It is the developmental "engine" that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices." From a biblical point of view such a definition absolutely corresponds with the creation-theological concept that humans are created beings and made by the image of God and as such put into an ultimate interrelation with the Sacred. Having lost this ultimate relation and embeddedness in God's reality humans are lacking deep connectedness, meaning, and purpose in life and thus are in search to fill the hole inside. In this sense, everyone is spiritual.

Despite the fact that spirituality is seen as a genuine human attribute closely associated with the human search for connection, identity, meaning, and purpose Hill et al. warn against an overly broad definition since "if any belief or activity that provides individuals with a sense of identity or meaning... is defined as a religious or spiritual endeavor, then this field literally knows no bounds and becomes outside the purview of what is spiritual or religious." They maintain that the search for the sacred has to be seen as the core characteristic. But, maybe there are just two sides of the coin, first is the general human quest and second is the question towards which object(s) or subject(s) it is oriented or directed.

However, if spirituality can be considered—as suggested by a growing number of social and psychological scientists—as an inherent, multidimensional, "central and universal domain of human development" then it is not only to be considered as a "major theme in child and adolescent development" it has to be a major concern in human interactions with children and, especially, with adolescents. A healthy spiritual

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68 Hill et al., 71.
69 King and Benson, 394.
70 Roehlkepartain et al., 11.
71 It should be noted here that, of course, there is also the possibility of spiritual and religious pathology. Fowler pointed out that especially during the first intuitive-projective stage of faith development children may experience long-lasting negative religious imprinting for instance regarding their emotions and imaginations of God (see above). Up to this time rather pathological then the much more obvious healthy and positive aspects and forms of religion had been in the interest of psychological research. However, it is true that "adolescence can be a time of particular vulnerability to spiritual pathology." Linda M. Wagener and H. Newton Malony, "Spiritual and Religious Pathology in Childhood and Adolescence," in *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, 140.
development then needs to be supported, nurtured and fostered, particularly, in the lives of young people.

Spirituality a Core Issue for Positive Adolescent Development

The central status of the spiritual and religious dimension of adolescent development attracts more and more notice in the scientific world also because of the evidence of their positive potential. Lerner and colleagues have noted that “contemporary scholars of adolescent development are pointing to the implications of religiosity and spirituality on positive youth development.” Benson and colleagues note that regarding positive youth development the spiritual religious domain has moved “to center stage.” Hill and colleagues, for instance, refer to numerous empirical evidences that show spirituality and religiousness in adolescence (compared to less spiritual and religious youth) to be correlating with more pronounced physical and mental health; less at-risk behavior, especially regarding drug and alcohol abuse; increased prosocial behavior; and less social deviance respectively less occurrences of crime, violence, delinquency, risk-taking, and early sexual activity. Additionally, King and Benson note that there is evidence that spirituality and religiousness may have an impact on increased school performance as well as on stronger involvement in community service and civic engagement. Further and more fundamentally, studies could also proof that religiousness provides to identity formation in adolescence. Besides, youth who declare religion to be important “are more likely to report that they have a meaning framework that offers direction and fulfillment in life.” It has also been shown that intrinsic religiosity correlates with the Marcia stage of identity achievement (see above).

72 Lerner et al., 65.
74 See Hill et al., 54-56.
75 See also King and Benson, 389.
76 However, as mentioned already in a footnote above, especially regarding mental health the opposite may also be true for certain forms of religious or spiritual belief systems.
77 See Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude, 211.
78 King and Benson, 390.
79 See Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude, 211.
81 Ibid, 18.
religious and spiritually active youth tend to reach the status of identity achievement more likely than their non-religious peers.

In a religious or spiritual context youth can more easily establish a coherent world-view and have access to vital resources that may help to integrate their own life-experiences into a narrative framework that combines both immanent and transcendent realities of life. Faith-based institutions like churches or congregations also provide an intergenerational network of interrelations and interactions where young people may not only find friends among peers but also among adults and even significant connections with older people who as well may serve as significant role models and enlarge the youth's perspective of life, death, spirituality, and the sacred. Thus, congregations or other religious institutions may offer possibilities for identity exploration and commitment-making in doctrinal, social, and spiritual contexts. King has explored the positive influence of religious contexts on the identity formation and well-being of youth. Furthermore in the context of religious institutions adolescents may "transcendent their daily concerns and encounter a supernatural other and a faith community in a meaningful way that nurtures a sense of self in relationship with others." In an ecological understanding of development as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (see above) a congregation can be a very vital and important part of a youth's mesosystem.

After all, spirituality and religiousness has been identified as core indicators of adolescent thriving (see Lerner above). Thriving can be seen as "the process over time of an individual's pursuing a life path on which individual or functionally-valued behaviors grow (e.g., character, confidence, caring) and move the person toward attainment of an 'idealized personhood' characterized by socially or structurally-valued behaviors such as contribution to self, family, community, and civil society." Religiousness and spirituality can have a profound positive influence on all eight identified flourishing.
categories which are character, competence, confidence, connection, caring, assets, self-control and regulation, and positive emotions.  

Spirituality respectively spiritual development, thus, “appears to be a potentially powerful resource for positive human development in the first two decades of life.” Since issues of identity, meaning, relationships, purpose, and vocation are particularly salient during adolescence and many developmental transformations and attachment transitions occur adolescence is also germane for religious orientation and spiritual development. Templeton and Eccles conclude their studies on the relation of spiritual development and identity formation with the statement that “adolescence and early young adulthood are crucial times for exploration and development of a spiritual identity and that spiritual identity work in adolescence can lay the foundation for future spiritual identity development.” Jane Kroger refers to the scientific consensus that mid-adolescence is the time for intensified exploration of meaningful life-philosophies, as well as religious or spiritual orientations. Among the various human life phases adolescence seems to be a crucial time to address and discuss spiritual and faith issues.

Adolescence and Conversion

The scientific study of conversion has a more than one hundred year old history. It seems, however, that in recent years the subject gained new interest. Whereas studies on conversion have traditionally been focused on religious change and the “radical transformation of self” as an intrapersonal process mainly in the context of Christianity the scientific call today is to broaden the picture by applying and reconsidering theories in the light of other world religions and religious movements. Nevertheless, all basic scientific insights so far see the phenomenon of conversion especially evident in the time of adolescence or youth. Already more then a century ago adolescence has been identified as the primal life span of religious transition or conversion. At first, early

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85 See Benson and Scales, 86.
88 Kroger, Identity Development, 63.
89 That is the most common psychological definition of conversion. See Spilka et al., 344.
scientific attention was rather interested in the *experience* of conversion that most frequently had been observed during adolescence.

The Early Conversion Paradigm: Sudden, Emotional, Crisis Driven

The father of the psychology of adolescence, G. Stanley Hall (see above), devoted a whole chapter in his groundbreaking two volume work "Adolescence" to "The Adolescent Psychology of Conversion" which contains one of the very few studies of adolescent conversion experiences at all. In the context of his concept of recapitulation Hall considers the time of adolescence as "the key time for religious development" and based on numerous studies he sees adolescent conversion as "a natural, normal, universal, and necessary process." Adolescent turmoil makes this life phase "a peak time for conversion experiences" and the adolescent transition to adulthood should also include a change in religious attitudes that may help to achieve one's place in the world. According to Hall it is no accident that adolescence as the age of personal religious awareness coincides with the maturation of sexuality and love. He compares "the awakening of love in adolescence to their love for God." Conversion experiences during childhood are considered by Hall as "superficial and incomplete" and after adolescence, as people become more fixed in their world-views, the initiation of a conversion experience is harder and its completeness rarer. However, it should be noted that Hall sees conversion rather as a psychological process "of subordinating the self to the limitations of reality and the needs of others" than as a religious process of accepting certain beliefs or doctrines.

Hall's study of conversion in adolescence is quite in line with the studies of his contemporary Edwin Starbuck (1866-1947), a pioneer in the field of the psychology of religion. Starbuck, too, sees the conversion experience as a natural phenomenon of

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92 For a brief discussion of Hall's recapitulation theory see above.
95 Nelson, 219.
96 Muuss, 262.
98 Ibid.
adolescence and stresses its suddenness. In the context of various revival movements in America during the second half of the 19th century Starbuck considers religious conversion to be a process of growth. “Conversion,” so Starbuck, “is characterized by more or less sudden changes of character from evil to goodness, from sinfulness to righteousness, and from indifference to spiritual insight and activity.” He argues with other scientists of his time that eighty percent of all conversions occur during adolescence respectively almost exclusively between the ages of ten to twenty-five.

William James (1842-1910), who happened to be Starbuck’s professor, was more interested in the actual results of conversion than in the experience itself which he also sees to be related to suddenness and crisis driven. According to James religious conversion can be seen as unifying experience of a “divided self.” Characteristics of a divided self are negative feelings like discomfort, unhappiness, being out of place, inferiority, guilt, not being your true self, etc. Thus, conversion is “an emotional experience to overcome these negative feelings.” The divided self is typical during adolescence. James early studies highlight the fact that religion can be a “unifying force” in personality and that religious conversion has examinable positive effects on an adolescent’s personality.

Although there have been already early voices that pointed to the fact that religious conversion is also occurring in the context of gradual religious growth and change the traditional concept of religious conversion is characterized by a crisis driven (caused by a divided self), sudden emotional experience that occurs naturally during adolescence. Several empirical studies have actually related high emotional states

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99 Arnett, 194.
102 See Gillespie, The Dynamics of Religious Conversion, 32-33.
104 Ibid.
106 George Albert Coe (1862-1951) was a prominent representative of this view. See Gillespie, The Dynamics of Religious Conversion, 34.
or emotionality to the experience of a sudden conversion.\(^{107}\) Thereby the sudden religious change experience often correlated with strong emotions and personal crisis "triggered by a deep sense of sin or guilt"\(^{108}\) and linked with a "stern theology"\(^{109}\) as well as with a higher level of anxiety.\(^{110}\)

Paul's spiritual encounter on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19) is "the prototype of conversion for the traditional paradigm"\(^{111}\) and the common interpretation of religious conversion. The basic assumptions derived from the Pauline experience correspond largely with the traditional scientific view of conversion. The corresponding key elements are 1) sudden occurrence, 2) dramatic change or transformation, 3) emotionally rather than rationally driven, 4) the convert is a passive agent and conversion is caused by external forces, 5) the belief change is followed by behavior change, and 6) conversion occurs once and is permanent.\(^{112}\) Although there are more recent scientific attempts to understand conversion more as a series of affiliative and disaffiliative acts that constitute a conversion career in which the convert plays an active role (even working out his or her own conversion)\(^{113}\) the traditional concept is still well documented. However, the traditional paradigm of sudden and crisis driven conversion is and needs to be modified and reconsidered since it appears to be too static, too exclusive, just focused on the individual and the once in a lifetime experience. Yet it has fostered a certain can-do mindset among many evangelistic motivated Christians.\(^{114}\)

\(^{107}\) See Spilka et al., 350-351.

\(^{108}\) Spilka et al., 349. It should be noted, as Watson points out, that the concept of sin and guilt can have a positive function within a 'Christian ideological surround' that provides a consistent context for their significance and their resolution. Studies have provided empirical support that a guilt-grace ideology may promote sensitivity to others since it is linked to higher emotional empathy and "lower levels of narcissistic exploitativeness." See P. J. Watson, "Apologetics and Ethnocentrism: Psychology and Religion Within an Ideological Surround," *The International Journal for the Psychology o Religion* 3, no. 1 (1993): 10.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.

\(^{110}\) Compared to gradual converts or nonconverts. See Spilka et al., 351.


\(^{112}\) Richardson, 165. See also Spilka et al., 349.

\(^{113}\) See Richardson, 172. It should not surprise that there are in fact individuals with self originated conversion experiences or stories, especially, if the person is consciously or unconsciously more driven by seeking attention and acceptance by others as well as by the desire to belong to a certain religious group of people as by genuinely seeking meaning and a personal relationship with God.

Conversion as a Process in a Dynamic Force Field

More recent studies, however, have shifted the picture or at least broadened the view. The contemporary paradigm of religious conversion rather stresses “a gradual, rational process of active search and self-realization.” Based on their studies of conversions to a millenarian cult (Divine Precepts) John Lofland and Rodney Stark conceptualized the conditions for conversion in a widely accepted seven step model. In order to experience a religious conversion a person must experience enduring, acutely felt tensions (condition 1) within a religious problem-solving perspective (condition 2), that leads the individual to see him- or herself as a religious seeker (condition 3); the person must encounter a religious group at a turning point in his or her life (condition 4); within the group an affective bond must be formed or pre-exist to one or more members (condition 5) and attachments with people outside the respective religious group need to be neutralized or absent (condition 6); there the individual must be exposed to intensive interaction in order to become a deployable agent (condition 7).

In this model conditions 1 to 3 are predispositions and seen as background factors; conditions 4 to 6 are situational factors that turn a “pre-convert” into a factual one (condition 7). Conversion here is understood and conceptualized as process by which someone changes his or her world-view. “A person gives up one...perspective or ordered view of the world for another.” However, Lofland and Stark understand this change of worldview as a conversion or rather as an affiliation to a deviant perspective in the context of a “high-tension religious group.” Their model of conversion conditions, therefore, seems to be rather specific and suggests a conversion to a cult or a religious sect.

However, several important aspects of conversion are highlighted. First, there is the emphasis on social network as a prime factor in conversion which includes members of the religious group as well as family, friends, and significant others (conditions 5 and

117 Ibid, 864-865.
118 Ibid, 862.
6). Second, the factor of the individual’s personality in the context of felt tensions, religious problem-solving, and religious seeking is stressed (conditions 1 to 3). Third, there is the factor of a turning-point experience which implies a contingency element (condition 4).

Other process oriented models have followed. Lewis R. Rambo sees conversion as a “process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations”\(^{120}\) that evolves over time, is influenced by a variety of interactive and cumulative factors involving relationships and specific situation. Conversion is never the result of one single cause or consequence. Rambo identified seven factors in a sequential and systemic seven-stage model.

Stage 1 is context and refers to the dynamic force field in which conversion occurs. Conversion is never without context and therefore context is not just a stage that is passed through.\(^{121}\) The political, religious, economic, social, and cultural contexts are not only shaped by people but people are shaped by the socialization processes of these contexts as well. Rambo distinguishes the macrocontext of political, economical, sociological systems from the microcontext of family, friends, religious and ethnic communities.

Stage 2 is crisis which forces people to confront their limitations and can initiate a quest to resolve conflict, fill a void, adjust to new circumstances, or find ways of transformation.

Stage 3 is quest that to some degree is influenced by someone’s emotional, intellectual, or religious availability. Most converts are in some way actively engaged in seeking fulfillment.

Stage 4 is encounter that brings people who are in crisis and searching for new options together with people who are trying to provide new orientations for the questors.

Stage 5 is interaction and refers to the most potent avenues of connection to the new option: relationships. Also important here are the experience of rituals, the getting acquainted with a specific language and rhetoric, as well as role-learning and role-playing within the respective group of people.


\(^{121}\) See Rambo, 20.
Stage 6 is commitment and the consummation of the conversion process. Central here is the convert’s reconstruction of his or her biographical memory and the deployment of a new system of attribution in different spheres of life.

Stage 7 is consequence which is manifest in a radically transformed life, a sense of mission and purpose, as well as security and peace. After some time it may be, however, that the individual may find that the new orientation is not or only partially what he or she expected. This may lead to disaffiliation.

Rambo’s model weaves together several research foci on conversion of the past century. Thus, the conversion process includes the individual’s opening to new options and seeking a resolution to the crisis or deprivation that makes change seem attractive; meeting the agent who embodies the religious vision; learning new roles, rituals, and rhetoric; and committing oneself to a new way of life.

Finally, the scientific consensus today is marked by the awareness that human beings are always on the move, negotiating their identity and exploring new life options, and that therefore conversion is not just to be seen as a static, total, and complete onetime event. More recent studies also have challenged the traditional definition of conversion as a radical transformation of self since there is “little if any evidence that conversion changes basic personality.” Based on more recent data also Paloutzian, Richardson, and Rambo conclude that “religious conversion influences people’s goals, strivings, and identity, but seems to have little appreciable effect on basic personality structure.” That people did not fundamentally change especially after a sudden conversion experience often becomes obvious when the waves of heightened emotionality and fervor have abated. There might be new or renewed convictions, a different prospect of life and framework of meaning, even a change of behavior and social relationships, but changes in self and basic personality are the result of a longer

124 Spilka et al., 345.
process and theologically speaking of the spiritual growing or sanctification fostered by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Conversion Phenomena and Motifs

Besides the different aspects of the conversion process identified and highlighted by Lofland, Stark, Rambo, Gooren, and others there is also to note that there are different conversion phenomena. Besides the phenomenon of affiliation where someone joins a religious group and faith without having been committed to another religious group or faith there is also the phenomenon of institutional transition or switching which rather means a change of religious membership to another denomination within a religious tradition. Intensification is the phenomenon of an individual's revitalized commitment to the faith one was raised or been just a nominal member. Cycling is the phenomenon when religious involvement varies across people's lifespan by dropping out only to return at various points in their lives. The last identified phenomenon is apostasy which is the abandonment of an individual's religious commitment in favor of the adoption of a nonreligious worldview. The categorization of the conversion phenomena helps to understand that the course of the conversion process may individually vary because of different personal backgrounds and contexts. It would therefore be unreasonable to expect a single model of conversion.

Not only the phenomena of conversion vary but also the types of conversion or the conversion motifs. Lofland and Skonvod have suggested a classification of conversion motifs that would differentiate various "conversion careers" since "conversions actually vary in a number of acute, qualitatively different ways." Lofland and Skonvod have suggested six different conversion motifs that differ in their degree of social pressure, temporal duration, in the level of affective arousal, in the affective content, and the belief-behave-sequence (what comes first and what follows). The six

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126 See Rambo, Understanding Religious Conversion, 38-40; and Spilka et al., 345-346.
127 See James T Richardson, ed., Conversion Careers: In and Out of the New Religions (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978). The term has been coined by this publication.
129 Ibid, 375.
conversion motifs have been modified and further differentiated to 11 conversion types. However, most typically are the following motifs:

1) The *intellectual* motif describes a conversion experience that has also been designated as “self conversion” since it “commences with individual, private investigation of possible ‘new grounds of being,’ alternate theodicies, personal fulfillment, etc.” by independently (without actual social involvement) using and investigating all kinds of impersonal sources and media (books, TV, seminars, internet, worship services, etc.).

2) The *mystical* motif is most commonly associated with the Pauline type of conversion. Thus, it is characterized by the classical conversion paradigms, sudden, radical, crisis driven, in such a way that the experience came over the individual and cannot be expressed in logical and coherent terms. Often the levels of emotionality and the sense of being divinely moved are very high. Associated with this type of conversion is also “a brief critical period prior to conversion, intense affect, and a change in belief that results in participation in the ritual and organizational activities of a religion.” The change of self and behavior is intraindividual in nature and not the result of social pressure.

3) The *experimental* motif is characterized by a pragmatic show-me and try-out attitude that is ready to give a try to the proposed activities and processes by withholding judgment. The fascination of something different attracts. Thereby the individual first learns to act like a convert, following the rituals, doing what the others do, and genuine conversion follows later. This mechanism is typically for socialization processes where people learn first social roles and then get more and more assimilated into the group. Changes in identity and world view are rather slow and gradual. In social science the concept of “seekerhood” is also associated with this type of conversion. However, the individual is an active agent in this type of conversion process.

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131 See also Spilka et al., 354-355.
132 Kilbourne and Richardson, 3.
133 Lofland and Skonvod, 376.
134 Kilbourne and Richardson, 4. See also Lofland and Skonvod, 378.
135 Kilbourne and Richardson, 6.
4) The affectional motif is marked by strong sentiment and emotional attachments to others which is much more important than cognitive elements (contrary to the intellectual motif). Of course, here “personal attachments or strong liking for practicing believers”\textsuperscript{136} are central to the individual’s conversion process and may lead into religious affiliation. People with a distinct affectional motif are more prone to social pressure since they rather see it as support than as inducement. Especially females are associated with this type of conversion.\textsuperscript{137}

5) The revivalist motif is associated with a conversion that “consists of a profound experience arising within the context on an emotionally charged crowd”\textsuperscript{138} often characteristic for the 19th century revivals. However, Lofland and Skonvovd see this motif to be declining in the industrialized and more sophisticated societies of the western world.\textsuperscript{139} Nevertheless, this motif is far from dying out since it is a fact that crowds can be brought to ecstatic arousals and to produce fear, guilt, and joy in a group context so that individuals thus stimulated may go through an outward and inward conversion process. Social-pressure is usually very high in such settings and “group-induced affect”\textsuperscript{140} causes change in behavior and attitudes.

6) The coercive motif is commonly associated with a brainwashing type of conversion and is of course far from being genuine. Conversion is rather forced upon the individual by distinct manipulative methods that entail “the socioemotional breakdown and subsequent submission of the individual to powerful group forces in a controlled setting.”\textsuperscript{141} The process of coercive persuasion has been described by a) total control and isolation (individually or in groups, group-pressure, obliteration of family ties and previous relationships), b) physical and psychical debilitation and exhaustion (or total claim of time, fatigue), c) confusion and uncertainty (threats, deception, reality is no longer what it was), d) guilt and humiliation (creating a deep sense of unworthiness as long as there is no submission or conversion), e) release and resolution (an absolute framework that provides only a single way of resolution).

\textsuperscript{136} Lofland and Skonvod, 380.
\textsuperscript{137} See Spilka et al., 363.
\textsuperscript{138} Kilbourne and Richardson, 7.
\textsuperscript{139} See Lofland and Skonvod, 380.
\textsuperscript{140} Kilbourne and Richardson, 7.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid, 8.
Although not among the classic conversion motifs Kilbourne and Richardson have also highlighted the psychopathologic conversion type. People with neurotic or intrapsychic conflicts, psychological distresses, unmet emotional needs, may as a compensatory mechanism attempt to solve their problems and their incapability to deal with frustrations and failure by going through a highly emotional charged conversion process. Often such people display after their conversion a) an exaggerated, irrational belief in new ideas, b) a greater concern with form and doctrine than with substance, c) a strong contempt for their prior belief, d) intolerance for all deviates, e) a crusading zeal to convert others, and f) a martyr complex.\textsuperscript{142}

The differentiation of conversion motifs helps to understand that there are in fact various conversion careers and that conversion processes may individually differ. Although there are obvious negative conversion motifs identified (like the coercive and the psychopathologic as well as to some extent the revivalist motif) each motif also highlights the fact that people and their contexts are different. It also highlights that there are different legitimate gateways to a subsequent religious or spiritual affiliation respectively there are different factors that foster a conversion career. However, especially regarding adolescents the most crucial context for a conversion is the social network.\textsuperscript{143}

Social Network, Attachment and Relationships

Newer studies of conversion have highlighted and focused on various aspects of the conversion process often bringing to mind that conversions happen in specific contexts. In this respect a main approach is the study of social networks since it is the common consensus that “social network ties are typically the most elemental and necessary precursors of conversion.”\textsuperscript{144} Thereby the family network and religious socialization are crucial. The individual’s attachment and emotional bonds to mother and father, as well as to people in romantic relationships may also have an influence on the

\textsuperscript{142} See Kilbourne and Richardson, 5.
\textsuperscript{143} Of course from a biblical point of view conversion is initiated and caused by God himself and therefore the most decisive force.
process of conversion or religious change. Attachment theory has suggested that individual differences in religiousness may be related to early attachment experience. It is said that religion is closely related to attachment experiences and that “God represents an ideal attachment figure.” Corresponding with the compensation model and based on evidence it has been argued that people with an insecure or anxious attachment history, in contrast to people with a secure attachment history, are more likely to experience “sudden religious conversions and change, presumably because such changes represent strategies for regulating felt security and affect...and for coping with crisis.” They also exhibit a more “emotionally based religiosity” and often have “higher levels of anxious attachment to God.” On the other hand, people with secure attachment patterns tend to see God as more loving, less distant and controlling as well as tend to have a more stable and emotionally close relationship with God. This observance supports the correspondence model and is in accord with the empirically validated conclusion that implicit relational knowing based on the individual’s experience of various relationship-patterns with significant people (parents, friends, lovers, authorities, etc.) also governs someone’s “automatic appraisal, or implicit knowing, of God and spirituality.” Since the experience of relationship-patterns in the horizontal sphere of life (immanent and interpersonal level) is also reflected in someone’s relationship-pattern

145 Attachment theory originally introduced by John Bowlby in 1969 postulates that attachment is a primary, biosocial behavioral system that develops in the child and is shaped by his or her immediate context. The basic attachment mechanism coined in childhood either by secure, comforting relationships with the child’s caregivers (especially the mother) or by insecure, unstable, fearful relationships is active and influential throughout the individual’s lifespan.


147 The compensation model proposes that among people with insecure attachment patterns with humans God function as a substitute attachment figure (emotional compensation).


151 Ibid, 227.

152 The correspondence model suggests that attachment patterns with humans correspond to or are reflected in the individual’s attachment pattern with God.

153 Hall et al., 241.
in the vertical sphere of life (to a personal God) human relationships play a significant role in the process of spiritual development and regarding someone’s conversion history. Gradual religious conversions are hardly a question of predispositional or personality factors rather they are related to “the socialization of religious standards from sensitive and responsive caregivers.”\(^{154}\) The correspondence model, therefore, highlights also the impact and importance of religious contexts especially regarding the family or parents.\(^{155}\)

In line with Rambo’s fourth stage, encounter, it can be said that the importance of relationships does not only apply to context but also to relationships with peers or others that are religiously seeking or committed. “Conversion is most likely to occur when spiritually ‘seeking’ persons are connected to devout others.”\(^{156}\) From all the literature and scientific research of conversion histories it is clear “that almost all people (men and women) are recruited to religious organizations through social networks.”\(^{157}\)

### Social Reorientation and Transformation of Identity

Social and communal aspects do not only play vital roles regarding the occurrence of a conversion experience but also regarding the process of the conversion. In his book *Rewired* Paul N. Markham is therefore challenging a traditional evangelical understanding which assumes conversion to be a rather interior and individual spiritual experience. The evangelical position that views conversion rather “as a limited transaction between God and the individual”\(^{158}\) is downplaying the role of the faith community in the process and treats the individual as the only real center of action. But the Christian community or the church is more than just the sum of its individual members and thus it is not just a contractual association of independent individuals. Especially regarding the conversion experience Markham stresses the importance “to recognize the formative or ‘causal’ powers of the community.”\(^{159}\) Conversion is not “an

\(^{154}\) Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, 242.
\(^{155}\) In fact, “more religious parents tend to more effectively socialize their adolescents to be religious,” especially if there is evidence for a secure child-parent attachment. See Regnerus and Uecker, 220. There is also evidence that people with insecure attachment histories tend to be “more religious if their parents displayed low levels of religiosity.” See Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, 225.
\(^{156}\) Regnerus and Uecker, 221.
\(^{159}\) Ibid.
isolated affair of the individual ‘inner self’; rather...conversion is a significant social reorientation commensurate with a transformation of identity.”\textsuperscript{160}

Since human nature is not to be understood in dualistic terms that leads to a body-soul or material-immaterial dichotomy but rather as a holistic, unique divine creation there is no such thing as a ‘conversion of the soul’. Rather, Markham proposes to see conversion as “the holistic process of socio-moral transformation of a person within the context of a Christian community.”\textsuperscript{161} This means that conversion is not just about accepting a new system of beliefs but it explicitly involves a transformation in socio-moral attitude and behavior. Accordingly, Markham argues that evangelism is “not about getting people to ‘believe’ this or that; rather, evangelism is characterized by graceful invitation to participate in a community where individuals are transformed together in a holistic fashion.”\textsuperscript{162} Markham does not exclude the possibility of the “eventedness”\textsuperscript{163} of a conversion experience but he stresses the fact that true conversion is a transformation that will manifest itself “as a change in the underlying motivation for particular socio-moral attitudes and behavior.”\textsuperscript{164} This transformation of motivating concepts in the individual’s life “is characterized by the acquisition of virtues intrinsic to the Christian faith and facilitated through social interaction and participation in practices inherent to the Christian community.”\textsuperscript{165} The transformation of motivating concepts through the conversion process is a transformation of identity that corresponds with the narrative-self. Since our sense of morality or character consists less of rules or principles but are rather based on collections of stories that allow us to orient ourselves in the world by disclosing who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. Thus Markham also integrates the importance of the bigger story or Christian meta-narrative into his understanding of conversion when he states that becoming a Christian is the process of integrating oneself “into a narrative tradition which has been (and is being) shaped by the story of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{166} George A. Lindbeck puts it this way: “To become Christian involves learning the story of Israel and Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid, 16.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid, 209.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid, 154.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid, 154-155.
one's world in its terms.” However, this is not just learning history but it is recognizing the God of history who is interacting with humans within history in the past, the present, and the future. The Christian community is not only a community of shared narratives but it also enables us through the other to move from a self-centered narrative to a service-oriented narrative.

Insight, Turning, Transformation

Approaching conversion from a mere theological and exegetical point of view Richard V. Peace in his book *Conversion in the New Testament* also supports the view of a gradual rather slow process of conversion. On one hand Peace is emphasizing Jesus’ working with the disciples over a longer period of time as a model of conversion. On the other hand he is also arguing for a rather process model by referring to the conversion of Paul. Although not neglecting the possibility of sudden conversions Peace points out that also the apostle Paul, who often serves as an example for a sudden and rather crisis driven conversion, went through a process, since on the road to Damascus he was not converted from an unbeliever to a believer. Paul had a long spiritual and religious background. Paul was a model Jew thoroughly trained in the law under one of the best scholars (Acts 22:3). His zeal for God was genuine (though misled). Paul “had been blessed with all the advantages of birth and background.”  

Thus, by taking a closer look Paul’s conversion experience does not display the pattern of the traditional conversion paradigm as typically as it has often been suggested. Though the event is sudden there is no real biblical basis for the assumption of a previous inner struggle or crisis as a preparatory stage that would finally lead to conversion. Instead, the crisis actually followed the encounter with Jesus. Before the experience Paul’s worldview and religious conviction was set and he was confident in his relationship with God after the experience all of this rather seemed shattered and in need of sincere reconsidering and reconstruction (see Gal 1:13-17).

All this happened because of new insight. By the encounter with Jesus and challenged by his simple question “why do you persecute me?” Paul suddenly realized

166 Ibid, 163.
that he is not fighting for God but against God. This new perspective based on a simple questions and the seeing of Jesus means a shift of paradigm and an actual turnaround for Paul. Regarding his conversion there is no emotionalism, no intense peer pressure, no indoctrination, and even there is no threat of judgment or direct accusation on the part of Jesus to produce fear or force a sense of guilt. Peace argues that “insight drives conversion”\(^{169}\) and this insight involves the realization of one’s own condition as it concerns God and it provides the motive for change. “Insight is the precursor to repentance; without insight no decision can be made about following a new way instead of the old way.”\(^ {170}\)

At the heart of conversion lies the image of turning from something to something or someone. In Paul’s experience the axis around which his turning rotates is his encounter with Jesus. Thereby Paul’s turning was not just caused by the powerful, irresistible outward event but rather by the interior quality of his experience since he states that God revealed his Son “within me” (see Gal 1:15-16). Based on gained insight into one’s relationship to God conversion in a biblical understanding always involves a turning to Jesus.

Paul’s recollection and report of his conversion experience in Acts 22 reveals his growing awareness that his encounter with Jesus requires response. “What shall I do, Lord,” he asked (Acts 22:10). Conversion, though, caused by an inner process of insight and turning calls for a reaction that leads to outward action by following a new path and direction. Paul is committed to listen to the word of Jesus. “Get up and go into the city” (Acts 9:6, 22:10). Though disoriented psychically by what happened and physically by his blindness Paul is called to meet other Christians. In Damascus Paul finally gets healed, baptized and gets to know his higher calling as he joins the Christian community (Acts 9:11-19, 22:10-16, 26:16-18). However, the immediate aspect of Paul’s new commitment to follow Jesus and his transformation can be seen in his joining of the Christian community, his acceptance of what happened to him as well as public confession of his faith by getting baptized, and by finally living out his new commission to be an apostle of the church.

\(^{168}\) Peace, 52.
\(^{169}\) Peace, 54.
Thus, by studying the biblical account of the ‘Pauline experience’ Peace has elaborated three central movements of conversion that three specific spheres of encounter. First, there is *insight* which basically means understanding me for who I really am in terms of my relation to God and understanding of Jesus. Here the encounter is with myself. Second, there is the *turning* away from my worldview and sins, by repentance and faith to Jesus Christ as Lord who directs my life because he revealed himself in me. This is the actual encounter with Jesus. Third, there is *transformation* of my life by which my commitment is translated into a new life experience reflected not only within me but in a new way of life and calling. Here the encounter is with my culture. The conversion experience understood as a basic sequence of insight, turning, and transformation thus affects who I am, how I relate to Jesus, and what I do within my culture.

After having compared this biblical conversion pattern derived from the experience of Paul with the experience of the Twelve Peace concludes that though Paul’s experience may be sudden and that of the disciples slow “in both accounts...we are in the same world of conversion.” Rather than to put too much weight on the actual nature of the conversion experience, sudden or slow, and on the various motifs or types of conversion, though there are significant differences, the biblical and theological reflection rather puts the focus on the quality and the content of conversion.

However, Rambo made the assertion that “conversion is what a group says it is.”171 There is certainly some truth to that and it applies to a Christian definition of conversion as well. There is no unitary definition of conversion in the Christian context. Nevertheless, the understanding of conversion influences the way of Christian communication and of evangelistic methods. Typically many revivalists for example favored a traditional or Pauline conversion paradigm and thus “have often called for emotional reactions rather than a turning of the whole life away from sin and back to God.”172 Such a statement is of course also based on a specific view of conversion. A rather comprehensive biblical approach to conversion may be seen in Gordon Smith’ definition:

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170 Ibid.
171 Rambo, 7.
The work of Christ makes conversion possible; even more, the actual focus and dynamic of conversion is that an individual comes to faith in Christ Jesus. Conversion is the act of believing in Jesus, choosing to follow Jesus and being united with Jesus as Lord and Savior. To be converted is to become a Christian. And the purpose of conversion is that we may ultimately be transformed into the image of Christ Jesus. Although all three members of the Trinity are actively involved in the conversion experience, the focus is on Christ. In fact, conversion is the fruit of an encounter with the risen Christ himself, as witnessed to and experienced within a Christian community. Conversion is not the result of an encounter with truth or principles or spiritual laws; rather, it comes from meeting Jesus.172

Adolescence – The Peak Age of Religious Change

Whereas in the past conversion was naturally related to the adolescent experience, researchers today stress that conversion is rather related to several turning points within a person’s life-cycle or even that conversion is an integral part of an individual’s life-cycle. However, the latter may blur with the general idea of change. Nevertheless, Henri Gooren suggests that conversion has to be seen in the context of conversion careers over a longer period of life and, thus, as part of a recurring cycle of preaffiliation, affiliation, conversion, confession, and finally (often after some years) disaffiliation.174 Thereby several commonly accepted important factors drive the conversion cycle, like personality factors (e.g. need for meaning-making, religious curiosity, etc.), social factors (social networks, socialization, etc.), institutional factors (mission methods, church atmosphere, etc.), cultural factors (cultural appeal regarding religion or religious groups, etc.), contingency factors (situational events, stressful situations, etc.).

However, although there may be several contingency factors (most of them are also factors that imply shifts in attachment175) like marriage, early parenthood, divorce, migration, death of a spouse or an important relative, as well as other turning points in the life-cycle the most important factor remains adolescence. It is not just a coincidence that “most of the literature on religious change deals with conversion during adolescence.”176 As already noted regarding the general spiritual and religious development most of the

crucial factors for conversion apply specifically to the age of adolescence.\textsuperscript{177} The adolescent searching for identity, meaning and direction may be a central predisposing factor. In fact, it is still true that religious conversion and the adolescent quest for personal identity (including sexual identity), relationships, wholeness, meaning, a value system "have a unique relationship."\textsuperscript{178} Gillespie, thus concludes that "while adolescence is not the only time that religious conversion might occur, it does prepare the ground for conversional change in a most unique way."\textsuperscript{179} It is also the time where intense religious conversions most often occur.\textsuperscript{180} Spilka et al. denote "adolescence as the customary time of conversion" and attest that "the empirical literature on age of conversion is consistent and has been for over 40 years."\textsuperscript{181}

An empirical research conducted in 1993 by the sociological Institute of the University of Zurich has provided quantitative data regarding the age of conversion among evangelical churches in the German speaking part of Switzerland. The study showed that 86.2\% of the evangelicals have experienced a conversion before the age of 31. In fact, already more than two third (actually 68.8\%) of the evangelical Christians in Switzerland have had their conversion experience between the age of 16 and 25.\textsuperscript{182} In total, according to this representative study the average conversion age among the evangelicals is 18 years. The research also looked at the recruiting of converts. Thereby the converts were grouped in two categories. One group is described as "selbstrekrutiert" (self-recruited). These are those converts who have at least one converted parent and thus have been religious socialized within the evangelical context. The other group is designated as "fremdrekrutiert" (being recruited by others). These converts do not have converted parents and have not been religiously socialized within the evangelical context. The study does not specify the recruiting means (evangelistic methods, etc.) or the social networks that were involved or had an impact on those converts. However, up to the age of 16 the vast majority of converts belong to the self-recruited group. 16 years is in fact

\textsuperscript{177} See Spilka et al., 346-347.
\textsuperscript{178} Gillespie, The Dynamics of Religious Conversion, 183.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid. See also pp. 107-109.
\textsuperscript{181} Spilka et al., 347.
\textsuperscript{182} See Stolz, 98.
the average age of all the self-recruited converts. On the other hand the average age of all those being recruited by others is 21.\textsuperscript{183}

In sum, the empirical study of the University of Zurich shows that more than 86% of all the conversion experiences among evangelical Christians in the German speaking part of Switzerland happened in the time of youth. Thereby, children and teenage conversions are most likely to happen among the religious socialized youth or the self-recruited. The vast majority of the conversions happening among older youth and young adults belong to the group of those being recruited by others.

That the findings of the study in Switzerland refer to a general phenomenon is indicated by research in the United States. The Barna Research Institute confirms that most Christians have taken their decision to become Christian during their youth. Barna states that "one of the most significant discoveries from our research among all age groups of the population has been that most people make lifelong, faith-shaping choices when they are young."\textsuperscript{184} In fact, Barna further explores that "if a person is ever going to become a Christian, the chances are that he or she will do so before reaching the age of 18."\textsuperscript{185} A similar study among about 1300 Christians of various backgrounds and regions in the United States has shown that 81 percent of the respondents became Christians before age nineteen.\textsuperscript{186}

However, it should be noted that adolescence is the crucial age for religious change in two ways. Adolescence not only happens to be the age of great potential for religious conversion or an increase in spirituality and religiousness it is also a crucial age for a loss of religiosity, disaffiliation, disengagement, or apostasy. Religious volatility seems to be a typical characteristic of older adolescence.\textsuperscript{187} Adolescence, thus, can also be associated with religious polarization.\textsuperscript{188} Nevertheless, this fact does not diminish the importance of adolescence as the crucial age of conversion since either way adolescence

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{183} Ibid, 99.
\item\textsuperscript{184} George Barna, Generation Next: \textit{What You Need to Know About Today's Youth} (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 77.
\item\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{187} See Regnerus and Uecker, 231.
\item\textsuperscript{188} See ibid, 219 and 231. See also Spilka et al., 347-348.
\end{footnotes}
is the peak age of religious change. Although there is no clear religious "hot spot" during adolescence, Regnerus and Uecker state that in general the "age 18 appears to be the most active or unstable age for both directions of considerable religious change."  

Adolescent Conversion and Positive Effects

The adolescent experience of conversion is mostly identified as a positive change in the scientific literature about conversion. Allison states that "the conversion experience moves subjects toward a more organized, differentiated yet consistent set of values which supplies the foundation for the beginnings of a stable identity, the capacity for enduring relatedness to others." Almost twenty years later also Zinnbauer and Pargament refer to several studies and note that adolescent converts have "significantly greater purpose in life" than nonconverts. Further, most converts feel to possess more spiritual resources, more tolerance and concern for others, less self-hatred, fewer feelings of hopelessness and despair, and less fear of death. Zinnbauer and Pargament, thus, say that "there is evidence to suggest that religious conversion may have a positive effect on mental and emotional health."

Also current research confirms the general positive effects of the conversion in the lives of adolescents and has found that conversion is related to "increased openness, better relationships with others, greater emotional responsivity, a heightened sense of personal satisfaction and happiness, and positive identity formation." Of course, positive effects are also dependent on positive religious contents and beliefs. It is certainly true therefore that "the essence of conversion is not found in the experience itself but in the content of that experience." Finally, the conversion constitutes an important religious experience, may it be sudden or slow, in the life and spiritual development especially of young people respectively adolescents.

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189 Anyway, it should be noted that although apostasy may occur in adolescence empirical science also points to the fact that "relatively few individuals remain apostates; most return at some point in the life cycle. This typically occurs when they are married, have children, and settle in an established community." Spilka et al., 374.
190 Ibid, 226. Regnerus and Uecker also refer to the consensus that disengagement from religion occurs most often between the late teens and early twenties (ibid, 222). See also Spilka et al., 122.
191 Allison, 36.
192 Zinnbauer and Pargament, 165.
193 Ibid.
194 King and Benson, 386.
The Engel Scale and the Decision-Making Process

Dr. James Engel has suggested a model for the spiritual decision-making process that helps to depict the roles of God, the communicator, as well as the listener in the process of an individual's response to the gospel message. Engel's scale represents a rather standardized concept of the spiritual decision-making process people go through and their receptivity to the gospel.

However, since Engel describes a process that includes various actors he helps to understand that the receptivity of people varies on an individual level and that people might be in a different stage regarding their own decision-making process. People attending an evangelistic meeting or event just have a different spiritual understanding and interest in the gospel. A successful communication of the gospel is thus not just to be measured by the obvious and public decisions that follow an evangelistic preaching but by the individual progress on the decision-making scale.

Engel's range goes from becoming aware of God as Supreme Being prior to any effective understanding of the gospel (-8). A further step leads to an initial awareness of the biblical gospel (-7). The awareness of some fundamentals of the gospel marks another progress (-6). Getting a basic grasp of the implications of the gospel message is a further step (-5) that is followed by a positive attitude towards the gospel of Jesus (-4). When the stage of is reached where an individual recognizes the personal problem of sin (-3) he or she is soon ready to actually decide to act and get more intentionally involved in the decision process (-2). Engel sees as further step in the actual repentance and acceptance of Christ by the individual (-1) that finally makes a human being in Christ a new creation. This level of personal conversion is followed by a post-decision evaluation (+1) that when positively mastered is leading to the incorporation into the body of Christ (+2) and a conceptual and behavioral growth of the individual (+3). A further step is identified with a stronger communion with God (+4). Another step on Engel's scale is the commitment to stewardship (+5) and finally by an ongoing process of reproduction (mission) through serving internally with the spiritual gifts and externally through witnessing and social action.

195 Peace, 6-7.
Though Engel's scale is rather schematically constructed and based on a traditional approach to evangelistic communication it helps to understand that decision-making involves process and that a spiritual progress can happen on many different levels. The success of an evangelistic initiative is thus not only to be measured by public decisions or baptisms. Since God is involved in the communication of the Gospel many things might happen immediately or also at another time in an individual's heart which is not seen or noted by other people.
APPENDIX L

LINK2LIFE 2002 & 2004: LIST OF TOPICS

Link2Life 2002 Topics (in German)

October 11, 2002: Choose or lose – Die Qual der Wahl
Niemals zuvor gab es so viele verschiedene Optionen, Strömungen, Trends und Angebote auf allen Ebenen des Lebens wie heute. Und das Tolle daran: Du hast die Wahl! Doch diese hunderttausend Möglichkeiten können auch zum Stress werden. Ständig was Neues, immer was Anderes, was aber hat Bestand? Woran kann ich mich orientieren? Wer sich nur durchs Leben zappt, zappt vielleicht daran vorbei.

October 12, 2002: Full size life – Das volle Leben haben!

November 8, 2002: Be cool! – Bis zur Unterkühlung?

November 9, 2002: All you need is love – Nur die Liebe zählt!

December 6, 2002: No limits? – Know limits! – Was Freiheit wirklich heisst

December 7, 2002: Dream on! – Wenn Träume wahr werden
Du hast den Grossteil des Lebens noch vor dir? Gut so! Dir steht die Zukunft offen? Toll! Doch, was erwartest du dir davon? Was soll dir die Zukunft bringen? Wovon träumst du? Was auch immer das Morgen bringt, das Träumen lohnt sich. Denn wer im Leben mit Gott träumt, baut sich keine Luftschlösser. Mit ihm werden die kühnsten Träume wahr!
October 29, 2004: I'm @live – True information is Life
Our time will be remembered as the age of information. We call today's young people "Generation@" since they grow up in a world filled with media and information technique. However, looking at our world, we realize, we may have a lot of information but there is a big lack of orientation. Which information do you follow? Who is your informant? What is true? What to trust? Jesus is the "word", the information, God himself, who became "flesh" - real. He is the designer of life and therefore his information means life. His life is "the information" we can trust and follow. He is The Message in a Body – 100% authentic! (John 1,14)

October 30, 2004: Be a star – Stars belong to heaven!
Castings here and there – Castings everywhere! The message of the recent glut of reality talent shows like Star Search, Starmania, Music Star, Super Star is: You have to give a good performance in order to get noticed and to get enough votes. This is even true in our daily life. But there is no audition for heaven, no performance to deliver ... Jesus accepts and loves you just the way you are. He is the one who votes for you. In his sight you are his child and thus his "little star." You belong to heaven - you are a lucky star!

November 12, 2004: Backstage – There's more than you think
There's a lot going on behind "the stages" of this life. Movies like "The Matrix" or "Lord of the Rings" picture a war between the forces of good and evil which takes place behind the scenes. There is even such a "war" in my own backstage area (my heart). The big headlines of this world exist also as little subtitles in my own life. We all know our own "Slim Shady" (Romans 7, 19-20).

November 13, 2004: Delete - God's anti-virus program
As users of the Internet we need virus protection, firewalls, up dates and so on in order to be secure and to prevent our computer from a system crash. Jesus is God's anti-virus program that saves and protects us from the consequences of sin. God's plan of salvation explained according to John 8, 1-11.

November 19, 2004: Self made man - Letting Go Leads to Having It All
Work hard, have success, get rich, use your elbows and buy life! You can do it, if you really want! But too often the dream of wealth and happiness turns into a personal nightmare. The road to real success and happiness is different. That's something the rich young man had to learn who approached Jesus asking: "what good things must I do to get eternal life?" (Matth. 19,16-21).

November 20, 2004: Sex sells – But you can't buy love
“Sex in the city” – sex is omnipresent. But in our society we too often confuse sex with love. Sex is a gift from God and is meant to be the most intimate language of love between "husband and wife." Something goes wrong with our need for intimacy. What love really means is realized by "the whore" who came to wash Jesus' feet: Luke 7, 36ff.
December 3, 2004: **Enjoy it! – Pure zest for life!**
God is not boring. "Enjoy life, but remember..." - Eccl. 11,9. Living our life as a response to the gift God made means being respons(e)-able. God is not restricting your life (by the Law, his word etc.) rather, he is actually promoting it. Joy is a heavenly term and living with God is living free.

December 4, 2004: **Open end – Life is worth it!**
People invest much in many anti-aging methods, face-liftings, we try to be forever young. People try to block the fact, that life is finite. But one thing is true, our life is worth being infinite. Eternity is promised. "The best" is still ahead and is about to come! With Jesus you can go back to the future!
The following table lists the actual duration of the Link2Life sermons that were broadcast in 2002 and 2004 including the invitation and prayer sometimes spoken after a short piece of music. The average duration in 2002 was 37 minutes and in 2004 it was 29 minutes.

Table Appendix M Length of Sermons incl. Invitation and Prayer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sermon Titles</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link2Life 2002</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose or Lose</td>
<td>35'10&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Size Life</td>
<td>33'20&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Cool</td>
<td>37&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All You Need is Love</td>
<td>36'30&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Limits? - Know Limits!</td>
<td>38'40&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream on!</td>
<td>40'40&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link2Life 2004</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm @live</td>
<td>32'40&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a Star</td>
<td>27'50&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Made Man</td>
<td>27'50&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Sells</td>
<td>29'50&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy it</td>
<td>30'30&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open End</td>
<td>32'20&quot;</td>
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APPENDIX N

EXAMPLES OF LINK2LIFE SERMONS


Hi everybody, great that you are with us! - Everything has its limits – even L2L. As of today the final L2L-weekend has already begun. It’s great that you are here. But why am I already talking about our last weekend together – We don’t actually say goodbye until tomorrow! But our topic this evening does indeed deal with limits.

It has become known by now, that I like to hike in the mountains. Just about thirteen years ago, three of us – my brother and I along with a friend – set out early one morning to storm a mountaintop. We took an aerial cable car up to a plateau on the side of a mountain in central Switzerland. The sea of clouds beneath us, the sunlit pre-Alps peak in front of us. It was the beginning of January. A mild winter, there was hardly any snow. Nevertheless it was cold. And since we three were such typical guys, we had simply picked out a mountain peak that we wanted to conquer on the spur of the moment. We had nothing with us – no map, let alone any mountain climbing equipment. But really, guys like us don’t need those things. So we headed out, the summit before our eyes. There was indeed a path on the mountain, but since we three really were such macho guys, we didn’t need it. Instead of following the trail, we want it all and chose the direct route to the top. Totally according to the motto: No Limits! First we had to walk up through an opening in the side of a cliff, which got narrower and steeper near the top and which led us into a rock channel. Before we realised it, we were climbing. At first there were no problems, I could even still take pictures [fade in photos] – here you see my brother. But then it started to get quite serious. At some point we became aware that, on our direct route up to the top, we could very quickly and rudely go down – it would only take one slip of the hand. It was already too late to turn around. When you’re on the face of the rock, without equipment, without rope, then climbing down is impossible. The view to the top is clear, but looking down... Then as a piece of rock came loose in one spot, right where I was trying to pull myself up, I suddenly found myself falling backwards. I have never before prayed so quickly as I did in this situation, and I consider it a miracle that somehow I could catch myself. My friend below me had almost been hit by the piece of falling rock. But to my horror, my knees also began to really tremble then. That’s dangerous when you are hanging from the rocks. Well, to make a long story short, we eventually reached the summit. Having made it to the top, we were naturally the proud mountain conquerors. We didn’t talk about the fact that we had suffered through the fear of death, that our fingers had almost frozen off – I mean, it was January in the mountains and we didn’t have any gloves either. I’ll tell you, rock can be pretty cold. In one place we set fire to some relatively dry grass that was growing between the rocks, in order to warm our hands for a few seconds. For me, the whole situation was an experience of discovering my limits and, above all, crazy stupidity. It had been a really
close call. I thank God that nothing happened, and I still go mountain climbing. But I'll tell you, never again without a rope. This spring I really did take a fall while climbing; after about 7 metres the rope caught me, and in the process I broke my ankle, but not my neck. I am still here because I had a lifeline.

No limits – know limits
Have you also had an experience of finding out your limits?

Talking about limits is not simple at all. I mean, who really wants them – limits. They sound so much like confinement, like restriction of my freedom. That's exactly what we don't want. On the contrary, we like to dream about unlimited freedom, absolute independence. Maybe that's why "No Limits" is so popular. When you enter this slogan in a search engine in the Internet, you will find hundreds of companies, agencies, organisations, etc. who use "No Limits" in their advertising. Where I live, a Swiss brand of watches has managed to link the slogan "No Limits" to their products through their sponsorship of extreme sports players. In their advertising spots you see these adventurous characters pursuing some form of extreme activity, like paddling through a narrow, steep gorge in a canoe or rushing down the slopes of Everest on their skis. No Limits, wow, now that's a feeling of being alive. This is where generally valid boundaries are crossed and things simply done that otherwise aren't normally done. This is pure freedom! Or so people think.

And the field of extreme sports is booming because it suggests to us the idea of ultimate freedom. The bungee jump is long since a thing of the past. New challenges are always being sought. It can't be bold enough. The BASE jumpers belong in this category. They are people who jump from some building or from a cliff face and revel in the free fall – for a few seconds. We accompanied just such a freak with a camera team this fall in Switzerland and also met some of his colleagues. Take a look at the following short report.

Video-Clip: Base Jump

There's definitely something appealing about it. But even so, we don't want to make an advertisement here for this type of recreational activity. My point with this report is this: Our drive towards freedom and independence leads us, among other things, to try to push against our limits and to continue to stretch our boundaries. We look for those experiences that test our limits. But even when we push ourselves past the generally valid boundaries, we still are not entirely free of limits. We remain dependent. And the more extreme the activities, the more distinct the dependencies become. For example, if I stroll through the pedestrian zone in Frankfurt, it doesn't actually matter to me what direction the wind is coming from. But if you are standing up there on the side of the cliff, the wind strength and the wind direction suddenly become a question of life or death. Or if I go for an easy hike, it's irrelevant how I pack my backpack. But if the backpack contains my parachute, which will enable me to have a soft landing, then every detail regarding packing is crucial. Do you understand? Even extreme sports athletes are not more independent; they just make themselves fully dependent on other things for a certain
period of time. The weather, the material, the technology, the “know-how”. A slip of the hand. This thing about No Limits, no boundaries is really just an effective lie used in advertising. “No Limits”, there is no such thing. There is no life without boundaries! Absolute independence is an illusion.

Now don’t misunderstand me. As a young adult you should certainly be independent, in the sense of being self-reliant and responsible. That’s part of being a mature adult. As children we dream about growing up one day. But you go to school. You have homework and tests. “Yes, but when I finish school...” – Yeah, then you’re an apprentice, looking for a job, having to pay rent at some point and taxes, needing a passport if you want to travel. You’re always dependent on something and somebody. And there are good and bad dependencies. For example, when I got married I consciously and deliberately committed myself to my wife. What I do or don’t do now affects her as well. But I would never want to become dependent on some kind of addictive drugs. And then there’s society, societal norms. I don’t accept everything simply as it is.

The question that faces you in life is not: When will I finally be totally independent, when will I no longer be obligated to someone, when will I no longer have to take everything into consideration? Rather the question is upon what and upon whom are you dependent in life. From whom do you accept limitation? What do you adhere to in life? To what or to whom do you commit your soul? You have the freedom of choice here. The great Designer of life wanted it this way. God didn’t create puppets, rather humans with a free will. But life itself doesn’t exist independently. For we don’t have life in and of ourselves. Indeed, we can clone life, thereby playing with it but not producing it. It is given to us as a gift. We can advance it or hinder it. We can preserve it or destroy it. It all lies in the nature of the thing: you and I, we’re created beings – deeply rooted in the Creation. There are laws of nature. There are laws regarding coexistence. Life, too, has its instructions for use.

Let’s take this egg as an example. A miracle of God. There’s life inside it. If you treat it according to God’s directions for use, a cute baby chick will hatch from it one day. But there are always people coming and saying: “Life with boundaries – no thanks! Do what you want! Anything goes!” They cry: “Freedom for the yolk! Get rid of the shell that binds. No Limits!” But such people are dangerous. They just want to throw your life into the frying pan and make scrambled eggs out of you. Don’t believe them. Whoever thinks, I can do and allow whatever I want, is not free! A fitting example?

It has to do with a king. His name was David. Someone who was used to pushing his boundaries. A real extremist. Even as a youth, armed only with a slingshot, he had taken up the fight against the giant Goliath – and triumphed. Where others had reached their limits and lost heart, he carried on. Certainly only because, at the time, he put his complete trust in the God of heaven. And so ultimately the former shepherd boy became a powerful king. Yes, and David really was the absolute king: magnificent palace, gigantic royal court, an army of attendants, the best food, successful and well-liked, lots of wives – a true statesman. But somehow as king he had drifted away from God more and more. To be sure, when you feel like the “king”, you’re not going to see yourself as
particularly dependent. You rule over your own life and, according to the situation, over the lives of others as well. Ultimately David determined what took place in the entire country and what didn’t.

And so it came to pass one day that the men of his nation were at war with a neighbouring country, and David was enjoying his life in the palace. Previously he had also been fighting in the war, but now he prefers to stay home. He has other people working for him. Every now and then a message arrives from the military staff, reporting on the progress of the battles. David can be satisfied with that. Otherwise there’s not much going on. It’s just David. He listlessly roams through the corridors of his palace, sits down on his throne now and then, stands back up, wanders the hallways again. He sits virtually alone at the table during meals. No desire to read or to write psalms – things are dreary and just downright boring for David. So he flops into bed at midday and sleeps until shortly before sunset.

Now, what do you do, when you’re hanging around the house by yourself and have nothing to do? Right, you watch TV – David is watching TV too – Terrace View. That is, he gets up and goes out onto the large rooftop terrace. In the current programming there is a pretty sunset, the sky is turning red. Nature channel, too boring. David leans over the porch railing: So what’s playing down there? The usual early evening programme. A couple of merchants are putting their goods away. An old man is sitting in the front garden and poking in the sand with his cane. Somebody is feeding his goats. David hears a couple of children giggling somewhere in the distance. But then suddenly his view locks in on something: David sees a woman undressing in an inner courtyard. Now it’s getting exciting. Because she is slipping off her clothes and washing her whole body from head to toe. David is running into a boundary now, do you see it? He sees a naked woman. That happens, to you and to me too. Nowadays nudity comes at us from all directions – in advertisements, in the Internet, on television, at the beach. Sex sells, so they say. Thus, seeing that is not the problem, particularly since nudity isn’t inherently bad. So David sees this nude woman. He now has two options. He could discretely look away or turn into a voyeur by continuing to watch. In your opinion, what should he do? What does freedom mean? Watching it or looking away? For many people in such a situation, it is as if they are captive, they cannot turn their eyes away. Do you know the feeling? Do you still sense that there is a boundary there at all?

David senses the boundaries, surely, but he breaks through them. He stares at the woman. Erotic programming, and so early in the evening, just exactly David’s taste. He can no longer take his eyes off this bathing woman. She was very beautiful too. And what his eyes see causes David’s sleepy thoughts to wake up in a hurry. I mean, what do you think goes through a man’s mind in such a situation? – Exactly. That gets something going – not just in your mind. Desire starts to grow. When you gaze at something, it feeds your thoughts. What you take into your mind and life doesn’t remain without consequences. It plants itself firmly up there (in your head). David’s power of imagination is heating up now too. Our David runs up against further limits. In your opinion, what should he do? Allow his thoughts to run wild or keep a cool head and turn his attention to other things?
What does it mean now to be free? Doesn’t it say in the Ten Commandments: You should not covet your neighbour’s wife?

Which should it be? In any case David doesn’t just think about his situation, he also takes action. After all, he is the king. And he had already touched her in his thoughts, now he had to have this woman in reality also. But let me read it to you:

2 Samuel / Chapter 11
David sent one of his servants to find out who she was. The servant came back and told him: “Her name is Bathsheba. She is the daughter of Eliam, and she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

The woman is married. What bad luck! Another boundary again. Is it right to come on to the wife of another man? What do you think? Well, David is the king. He issues laws and guards their observance. He can do and allow whatever he wants. And he wants to have this Bathsheba. Her husband is serving as an officer in David’s army. All the better, for that means she is by herself. By the way, David too is already married, several times over in fact. It doesn’t matter. He desires her now. He lives completely according to the motto: No Limits. He has this Bathsheba brought to him and organises a romantic meal by candlelight. Bathsheba naturally feels flattered by the king’s interest.

They are still just sitting there across from each other. David could gallantly have her escorted back to her house. In spite of his bad intentions, it would have simply been a lovely evening. Doesn’t God say in the Ten Commandments: You should not commit adultery? Yet David trespasses this boundary too. David brazenly makes a pass at her and ends up sleeping with her.

As Bathsheba secretly and quickly slips out of the palace early the next morning, David thinks with pleasure about the previous night. The perfect “one night stand”. But maybe his conscience is bothering him too. Half so wild, David, but a lot of people do such things. And finally, you are the king!

Now, our story here is not over yet. Whoever has begun to live according to the motto: I’m going to do and allow whatever I want to – that person gets more and more caught up in sin.

But later, so it says here in the Bible, when Bathsheba found out that she was going to have a baby, she sent someone to David with this message: “I’m pregnant!”

After the sweet prelude, there comes now a bitter aftermath. After a while, David’s conquest notices that she is pregnant. There’s no doubt that the baby is his. Her husband is away in the war. Now it’s getting embarrassing because it could become public. But David is nobody’s fool. When the news about the baby is conveyed to him, he comes up with a clever plan. He has Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, brought to him. Gives him a vacation. And after he receives a report about the battle activities from his officer, David thoughtfully sends Uriah home to his wife in order for him to rest up from the stresses of
combat. [with an eye wink] Uriah, so David thinks, will sleep with his wife and the baby will then be his. But he doesn’t do that. The good soldier that he is, he doesn’t go to his wife, but rather, out of solidarity to his comrades in the field, he spends the night with the royal body guards. When David finds out about this, he has Uriah brought to him once again. This time David invites him to dinner and uses a time-proven method. He gets him drunk. But this too fails to induce Uriah to go to his wife. Now it’s slowly getting unpleasant. Now David is breaking all the limits. He writes a letter to his general with an order to have Uriah killed. And now you have to try to imagine this: David hands the true and loyal Uriah the letter that contains his own death sentence. He takes the letter dutifully to his general, and the general follows David’s command. The message from the front comes quickly: Several soldiers were killed while attempting to storm a city, and Uriah was among them. A deliberate defeat had been orchestrated as commanded, just to get rid of Uriah. And so that it wouldn’t attract undue attention, a few other soldiers had to be a part of the campaign at the same time. Now Uriah is out of David’s way. The scandal has been prevented. No one has become suspicious.

When Bathsheba heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for him. Then after the time for mourning was over, David sent someone to bring her to the palace. She became David’s wife, and they had a son. The Lord was angry at what David had done.

Well done, David! Very clever. Or what do you make of it? Our David lives completely by the motto: No Limits! There are no boundaries for me. I am the king. I can do and allow, whatever I want. Isn’t that living in freedom? You could think that, were it not for this whole trail of devastation that he left behind him. What began with the lustful staring, led to the death of Uriah and some totally uninvolved soldiers. Led to lies and breach of trust. I mean, would you trust a king who acted like this? Or imagine, you were married to David. You certainly wouldn’t be pleased with the situation.

God too, so it says here, abhorred what David had done. You know, we humans can despise God or simply disregard him. We can carry on with our lives, being indifferent to His presence. Yes, you can declare your independence from Him. But God remains there in spite of that. For God created you, you didn’t create Him. He won’t allow Himself to be pushed out of our lives. At some point he catches up with us again. Because your life belongs to Him, He will ask you one day to give an account of what you have done with it. David had forgotten that. He was the king after all. He could do and allow, whatever he wanted.

But like his example shows: Whoever doesn’t respect God’s limits, will burden and destroy life, his own and that of others. He stumbles from one mess into another. And in an attempt to cover things up, we just end up producing more of the same. Because one mess creates the next. That is the law of sin. That is not pure freedom! It isn’t the case either that David didn’t know that what he was doing wasn’t good. He knew what kind of limits God has set for our lives. He was familiar with the 10 Commandments, which govern our coexistence with God and with our fellow man. “You should love and honour God, do not misuse His name, do not worship false gods, keep the Sabbath, honour your father and mother. Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie and do not covet that which belongs to someone else.” We all know that these boundaries from God make sense. They don’t spoil life, they benefit it. They don’t destroy life, rather they build it up. Yet like David, we break through them again and again.

414
Why is that? Very simple, we humans have lost our innocence and believe the Devil’s propaganda. We read at the very beginning of the Bible how the adversary of God was already whispering in man’s ear: “No Limits! God just wants to restrict your life. I’m telling you, do whatever you want. Free yourself from God. You don’t need any master in heaven, govern your own life! Besides, living without limits, independent from God is a lot more fun. You yourself can be like God. Totally independent.” That’s just like with the egg from earlier. Do you really want to be thrown into the pan?

It is crazy, in the truest sense of the word, but this propaganda of the Devil works, we believe it. At a public demonstration I meet a really stoned young man with glassy eyes, hanging around a big staircase. With complete seriousness he says to me: “What? Life with God, are you kidding? I want to be free.” Now I know, unfortunately there are too many Christians who give the impression of restrictiveness and lack of freedom. But it is a mistaken perception to think that God just wants to restrict our lives. That is totally turned around. That’s like in advertising: When people are asked which advertisement first comes to mind when they think of the topic of freedom, do you know what 90% of the respondents say? What do you think? – Marlboro! The cool cowboy who rides across the broad expanse of the prairie and sits by the campfire. A feeling of freedom is very cleverly conveyed here, and that for a product where the sponsors know full well: Smoking is addictive. Nicotine is a drug that kills. Crazy, reversed way-of-thinking propaganda. This is exactly how the Devil does it. He sells us a life of so-called freedom that actually makes us dependent, and that which truly liberates he sells as a lack of freedom. – And we believe that still too. David believed it too, there on the rooftop terrace. Do you believe it also?

But you know, it’s exactly the opposite that is true. Jesus came to our world, in order to destroy the lies of Satan. He came to show that God liberates people rather than enslaving them. His life in this world didn’t leave behind any trail of devastation, but rather one of healing and deliverance. And this trail of deliverance has run through the history of the world ever since. Millions of people have experienced it already: Whoever commits his life to Jesus, the God of heaven, will find true freedom. Freedom that comes from the heart. Freedom that makes it possible for us to have the life for which we were actually created. A life of love and righteousness. Being free means living according to your destiny. And you find that only with God. Because He is your Creator.

Jesus said, and we read it in the gospel of John (John 8:34+36): “I tell you for certain that anyone who sins is a slave of sin. ... If the Son of God gives you freedom, you are free indeed!”

Do you understand, it is sin that makes us slaves, that loads us down and destroys. Not only in David’s life, also in yours. But Jesus wants to set you free from this imprisonment, as He calls it. He wants to liberate your life from false dependencies and unburden your soul. For a life without God isn’t free. Above all, it isn’t free from guilt. Jesus, however, died on the cross for you for exactly this reason. Your guilt is done away with there. His forgiveness is the key to freedom. For David too by the way. When it really became clear to him what he had done and his conscience plagued him, he turned
to his God. He had to bear certain consequences because of his actions, but he received forgiveness from God, unburdening for his soul. That is freedom. Your life too is destined for freedom. Jump in!

Link2Life 2004, Sermon 3: Backstage – There’s more there than you think

Can you barely stand it sometimes either? – All these headlines. You open the newspaper or zap through the day’s news on TV and ask yourself: What’s the deal with all this?

Dead children after a hostage-taking in Beslam, bomb attacks in Iraq, blood-covered subway riders in Moscow, a gigantic wall separates Israelis from Palestinians. People are deceived and lied to, violated and abused. There is hate and contempt, hypocrisy and ridicule. People are beaten, robbed, murdered, slandered and ruled by greed.

And then we stand there and ask ourselves, “Why?” Why do you allow that – God? A lot of people do that. I have met some people who dismiss any thought of God with the argument “if there really was a God...” What they are actually saying, however, is: “I have nothing to do with everything that’s going on in the world. God would actually be responsible for that. As a sort of cosmic forbidder of evil. But He isn’t doing anything, so therefore, He doesn’t exist.” And that’s completely human. Yet we also know: When in fact it’s a matter of taking responsibility for something that is our fault, we often come up with a lame excuse. We’re not even afraid of twisting the facts. Like the guy who wrote to his accident insurance company: “The telephone poles kept coming closer to me in a zigzag course. I tried to swerve out of their way, but then one of them hit me anyway.”

But it’s not as simple as that. Behind that which is being played out on the world’s stage, in the backstage area so to speak, is ultimately this struggle between good and evil. The screenwriters in Hollywood haven’t simply dreamed it up. – Because, cross my heart, what you see as fat headlines in the newspaper can also be found as small subheadings in your own life. Lies, jealousy, quarrels, greed, resentment, hate...the whole catalogue – you know nothing about it, you say?

Do you know this nice young man here? His name is Marshall Mathers. Grew up in Detroit. His father took off when he was still a baby. He was brought up in the area where the “white trash” lives. In run-down trailer parks. His mother is a drug addict and continually brings different men home with her. Going to school was a horror for Marshall. Little Marshy is laughed at, excluded. Beaten to the point of unconsciousness. When his brother dies, his mother wishes that Marshall had died instead. A cold, cruel world. But Marshy wants to make it better some day. He marries young and has a daughter. Wants to be a good father to his newborn daughter Hailie. He works as a kitchen helper, gets his high school diploma. And he raps. Writes rhymes. Tries to make his voice heard in the rap scene by using a positive message. And fails miserably. That has changed. Today Marshall Mathers calls himself just MM or more specifically Eminem. He is now the most successful white rapper of all time. Nowadays his music is really nasty. He shocks. His lyrics are full of violence and hate. Now he’s exactly what the people want – Slim Shady, at least on the outside anyway. “I’ve created a monster.
Nobody wants Marshall anymore, they all only want Shady!” complains Eminem in his No.-1-Hit “Without Me”. In an interview he says: “The world is sick. It’s only been since I’ve started pissing on everybody that they like me! It’s perverse, no one wants the real Marshall Mathers, but Slim Shady, the bad guy, becomes a star. – The world is sick.” But something is backwards here? In the world, with Eminem. And with you?

Yet it’s like that, we gladly amuse ourselves with wickedness. Hollywood wouldn’t stand a chance without sex and crime, violations and explosions. That gets us excited and it fascinates us. The bad guy is cool, the good guy is a wimp. The bad guy has more entertainment value. Betrayal is thrilling, being faithful and true is boringly normal. A film about a good neighbourhood? No thanks, but Alien Attack, now that’s cool. A flick with the title “Happily Married”, who on earth wants to see that. “A Little Love on the Side” or “Adultery” would draw more interest.

Why is that so? Quite simple really, because this guy here likes it better that way. May I introduce him, this is my Slim Shady. We’ve known each other a long time. Actually he is something like my alter ego. And my advisor in almost all of life’s situations. – I was shopping with my wife recently. On the drive to the big shopping centre, a fancied-up Mercedes comes rushing up from behind. Boldly overtakes the car travelling behind me and then practically sits right on top of me. Obviously I’m in his way. He’s literally clinging to my back bumper. The muffled beat that pounds its way over to us, as well as a glance in my rear view mirror, confirm my suspicion: One of those sunglass-wearing, macho types. He likes these kinds of situations. I don’t actually drive at a leisurely pace either. And my Slim Shady knows that. He whispers in my ear, “drive slower – teach this character a lesson, he needs it”. Obediently I let up on the gas pedal, forcing the other guy to slow down and make like a Sunday driver. And it works, the guy behind me is becoming visibly more impatient.

At the intersection there are several options for entering the parking garage. I act like an indecisive retired person. Enter on the left or the right, or maybe it would be better to go straight? Slim Shady is pleased. The guy behind me is boiling mad. You can tell that by how fast he is chewing his gum. I drive into one of the parking garages, the Mercedes close behind me. Now this guy will surely want to teach me a lesson. For he stays right on my bumper from one parking deck to the next. He parks not far away from me. We encountered each other in the elevator. He scornfully hissed at me: “Driving extra slowly and braking, I could bring charges against you!” I remained calm. But don’t you think the other voice inside me was operating in high gear. It was saying things like..., I see, you want to hear it: “You’re nothing but a pair of sunglasses with a head attached”, “So Daddy gave you the Merz, that makes you tough, huh.” And those were just the milder thoughts.

My alter ego. Do you have one too? The big whisperer in the backstage area of your soul. Sometimes it’s startling, the things that come into your mind. There is a part of me that actually wants to act friendly and appropriately, to do good. But then there is this other me: “Oh come on, just ignore your conscience.” “Other people do it too.” “The main thing is, it does something for you.” “Simply take it, grab it, make a go for it, just do it.”

417
Haven’t you also already become acquainted with your own Slim Shady? But he really means well, he’s just looking for your best interest. In reality he drags you into the dirt and filth. He sees other people as objects that he can take advantage of and use. There goes this Amazon woman walking by you. – No, you don’t do that, you’re with your girlfriend after all, but he does it! He lies, he steals, puts others down, thinks that revenge is the answer. Can’t share, is often dissatisfied. Wants to have more. He lusts, is indifferent or lacks self-control. My alter ego.

Do you understand, it isn’t “out there” in the world where things are backwards, no, it lies deep inside us. The Bible doesn’t call it Slim Shady, rather the totally uncool: Sinful Nature. “The desire for evil.” – But it’s true, sin is simply a part of us. I mean, I never had to learn to be stingy, but I’m learning how to share. I never had to learn how to lie, but I’m learning all the time and in every situation how to be completely honest. I never had to learn how to be mean, but I’m still practising how to set an example of friendliness. And as you’ve seen, I’m not always successful.

Now, I know, I’m not the only one who has this experience. You’re familiar with it too. The apostle Paul also faced this dilemma. In a letter to the Christian church in Rome he wrote very candidly: Romans Chapter 7:19–21: I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life – that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. (NLT)

“I want to do what is right, but I do what is wrong.” Slim Shady existed even 2000 years ago. The sin in me. Everything that goes wrong on this planet is really quite ironic. We all actually want only good things, we want peace and happiness, healthy relationships, joy and love. In spite of that, we have these headlines; our lives are going off course somehow.

The sin in me. The sin in you. Your alter ego. That’s what it is that separates us, that stresses and destroys relationships, between us humans and God. And this has been going on for a long time.

You surely know about Adam and Eve. – No, they aren’t the siblings of Hansel and Gretel. They’re our ancestors. Yes, this old story with the snake and the fruit. The Bible tells about it in the first few pages. It’s not a fairy tale, rather it’s the answer to the question of where our Slim Shady comes from. In the beginning everything was very good. The beauty and the enchantment of nature were still completely untouched. And the chemistry between God, man, animal and nature was in tune. That’s peace. But in the middle of all the trees there also stood this Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. You know, our mutual parents didn’t yet know anything about Slim Shady. God actually wanted us to avoid getting to know him. Quite logical really, I mean, God created our lives to be perfect, our relationships to Him and with each other were completely without baggage or stress. Just imagine, everything was good, simply good, in every relationship – in your home, at school, at work, in our relationships, yes out there in the world. No
big, fat headlines. Life is running smoothly and without burdens – just exactly how we would want it to be. And it was God’s desire that it should stay that way. With the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, God didn’t really want to withhold something from us that would make us richer – rather poorer. For in order to know what is good and what is evil, you have to first of all open the doors to evil. You have to encounter evil. But what father wants evil to come into the life of his children? When God said, “don’t eat of this fruit”, the implication was that it is possible for you to do it. A relationship with God is based, like all genuine relationships, on trust and love. You make the decision.

Lucifer, the angel of light and created by God as well, had also made his decision. He had rebelled against God, wanted to be like God himself. Even before God created the world, he staged a revolt against his Creator and broke ties with Him. “God is unfair” is his motto and with this message he has been gathering support ever since. With us too. Very successfully, unfortunately. Even back then he was sowing the seeds of doubt. “Did God really say, you shouldn’t eat of that fruit? No, how mean. The Old Man knows only too well that you yourselves can be like Him. You just have to eat. Do what you want to. Hey, Eve already tasted the fruit, it’s really sweet and juicy. And it will make you smart. God, you won’t need Him anymore. You will be your own lord and master. Live independently, do as you please. He really just wants to oppress you, like a dictator, keeping you down and submissive. No, free yourself from Him, live a self-determined life! That seems to be convincing. Eve helped herself. She trusted Satan, not God.

Yes, and since then we know what good and evil are. We know about not only love, but also hate. Great thing to know. And the walls that we build up between each other are the fruit that we end up with from grabbing at this knowledge. For now it is our guilt that divides us, that turns us humans into a security risk. It is our guilt that makes us fight against each other and turns us into soldiers. Because sin destroys trust and stifies love for others. That’s not true just in the life of Marshall Mathers either. No, we are all familiar with that.

Slim Shady is the price we pay for that. We lose our innocence with him. Adam and Eve realised that they were naked. Until then that had not been a problem. But now there is this naked exposure. And we humans have been trying ever since to cover it up. We sew our own loincloths, made out of excuses. Or else we simply shift the blame off ourselves. Adam says now: God, I can’t help it, the fruit simply came along in a zigzag pattern, headed at me and I had to take a bite. – Umm, oh no, wait a minute, Eve, yes it was Eve actually. It’s her fault. – And what about the Devil. He laughs up his sleeve for every person he can get to believe his lie: God is unfair. Because if there really were a God...!

You know, Satan is more real than you think. We have made him into the prince of this world. The Bible depicts him as the adversary of God, the fallen angel. And now he is yanking us with him in his downward spiral. Yes, living independently, self-determined, liberated from a God, being my own master, we grab at the ring of power, our motto is to be like God. But the ring of power turns out to be a vicious circle of selfishness. Me, me, me!
Satan is by no means simply a fashion accessory of the Gothic scene. Many young people wear the black clothes, the metal-studded leather belts, the skulls and upside down crosses as protective shields of strength and superiority for their wounded souls. He’s also not just a scary entertainer in parlour games of the occult. Which, by the way, take place quite commonly among young people. And not just since there was a photo story in Bravo ten years ago that spanned several issues and that dealt with black masses. The Devil is also not simply the friend of all black metal and death metal fans or the cloak covering the sadomasochism scene. The Devi doesn’t just shock-rock either with Marilyn Manson or other performers on the stages, in order to criticise the middle-class hypocrisy of the ordinary everyday person. No, the Devil doesn’t simply belong in the corner of the clandestine gatherings and bloody rites that take place in the graveyards. Or to provide a little bit of spooky atmosphere at Halloween.

He is more multidimensional. We’re more likely to find him in the backstage area. He prefers to operate in the background of life, but in a cunning way there. He has many faces. It isn’t him who makes you do bad things. But he knows only too well what your Slim Shady likes. He elicits from you only that which is already a part of you. He plays the keyboard of sin expertly, and we join in with his melody.

Jesus encountered him too. At the very beginning of his ministry. Satan is certainly not stupid. He knows why Jesus has come. On account of us, you and me. God knows that we cannot deal with the sin problem by ourselves. Slim Shady refuses to be put off so easily. Jesus came to pay for your sin debt and mine and thereby to prove to us: God is not unjust, God is not a loveless dictator. No, He loves us so much that he takes upon himself the guilt of His created beings, yours too. Because sin leads to death, that is the cost. But God pays for it. Because He is just, because He loves. But Satan lies.

Do you know what is contained in the creed of true Satanists? Here is an excerpt: “We worship Satan. We worship Satan as the symbol of freedom. We release the powers we have within ourselves. Satan is not a person and we are not his representatives. Satan is in us! When we venerate Satan, then we venerate ourselves. We consider as unnatural any religion which does not correspond to the human disposition, but rather restricts it. All this makes us weak, for we are constantly pulled back and forth. We have gotten used to wanting to be good, but they forgot to tell us that we should be good to ourselves. This order venerates Satan as the ‘evil one’. This order sees the good in ‘evil’. Our law states: You are free, you are God, you are your own god!”

Do you know what these Satanists do? They turn Slim Shady into God. What is described here as freedom actually means obedience to your sinfulness. Do you really believe that makes you free? Take a look at our world, take a look at your world. Does sin make you free? Sure, you can very easily justify sin by simply accepting it as part of who you are. Yin and Yang. Cool. Violence simply belongs to life. Abuse needs it. Your boyfriend lies to you, give him a hug! You’re excluded in class, be happy. Evil belongs to life. So live it yourself! That is the Devil’s maxim!
Do you understand, there are two options. Either you make your Slim Shady into God or else you hand him – and thereby yourself – over to God.

I know that you too only want what’s good, for yourself, for your loved ones, for our world. Paul also has the same point of view. Because in his letter to the Romans he writes further: *With my whole heart I agree with the Law of God [the good]. But in every part of me I discover something [Slim Shady] fighting against my mind, and it makes me a prisoner of sin that controls everything I do. What a miserable person I am. Who will rescue me from this body that is doomed to die? Thank God! Jesus Christ will rescue me.* (Rom 7:22–25) (CEV)

You know, Satan doesn’t actually care how you live your life, virtuously and in line with the rules or rebelliously, regardless of which trend you follow, which life philosophy you set for yourself, the main thing is that you remain in the matrix. The important thing is you live without Jesus and thereby miss out on truly living. For Jesus came into our world in order to change the hearts of mankind, not with force and coercion, but rather with love, with understanding, with forgiveness. Because God can change things only in this way. A person here and a person there, wherever someone allows Him to draw near.

Who should guide your life? Shady or Jesus? You decide. God will respect that. He didn’t create you to be his puppet. You’re not a remote-controlled toy, neither for good nor for evil. Rather a person with a free will. And love can exist only where there is free will. And love doesn’t force itself, God woos you. That’s why He became human. He took the way that led to the cross because He didn’t want your Slim Shady to destroy you. In Jesus, God stretches out His hand to you and says: “Hey, trust me. I will take control of your Slim Shady. I, the Lord of everything in your life.” Don’t let yourself be fooled, there is more there than you think.

Lead-in Prayer:
God is not passive in this world. He’s not simply an uninvolved spectator, watching as we provide material for our headlines. If He doesn’t simply clean things up for us as an interplanetary guardian in charge of keeping order, it’s precisely because real change for the better must come from the inside. Changes in the world can only be accomplished when something changes in us. Therefore He doesn’t just sit there on the outside; rather He is here on the inside, where your Slim Shady lives too. You only have to surrender him to Jesus. He forgives, and that really sets you free!

**Link2Life 2004, Sermon 5: Self-made Man – Letting Go Leads to Having It All**

When I just a little bit younger, I always wanted to hear a bedtime story. In the evenings my mother used to sit with my brother and me in our room and read to us. Children love that. You’re lying there in bed, all snuggled up nice and warm under your blankets and listening to a story that carries you slowly into the world of dreams. Your little eyes close, Mommy tucks your covers in, and peace settles over you. That’s not the case with “John in Luck”. Do you know the story of this silly fool? I could never fall asleep listening to this story. Such a dumb guy. This John works hard for 7 years, and in the end
he receives as his wages a lump of gold as big as his head! His boss wasn’t stingy at all. He didn’t hoard the big fat profit all to himself, but rather he shared it with his employee. So far so good, a great message that could help you to have sweet dreams. But then this John fellow goes out and squanders his riches little by little. He barely has one thing before he decides he wants something else. First he trades his gold for an old horse, but the horse is too stubborn. So then he trades the horse for a cow, but he is still not happy, so he trades her for a pig. As stupid as John is, he soon trades this too and keeps trading until finally – dissatisfied with everything – he ends up with nothing at all. And how does John react then? He is delighted! He’s simply happy. At first he isn’t satisfied with anything and in the end he is satisfied with having nothing! So much crazy foolishness! – Tell me, when you were a kid, could you have fallen asleep while listening to such a story?

Well, now that I am somewhat older I recognise a lot of life wisdom in this old fairy tale. I mean, what exactly do you need to be happy in life?

Success in an occupation? Having a career, lots of cash in order to be able to afford a cushy life for yourself? Now then, if success really could bring happiness, then all those people blessed with success would be on cloud nine. But that is frequently not the case. If that were so, Elvis would still be appearing on stage in the retirement home, and Ms. Monroe would be advertising anti-wrinkle cream. But they aren’t doing that. At the height of their success they took their own lives. Unhappy stars are hardly a rarity. The same thing applies to the rich in general. If wealth and prosperity could bring happiness, then we here in central Europe would be the happiest people in the world. But we aren’t. With the possible exception of this aging jet-setter:

Video clip (A rich old woman declares that happiness is laughing with friends while golfing or hearing a little bird singing in the tree).

Well, apparently it is indeed easy to make us German-speaking people happy. According to a current study done by the recreational research institute, all that is necessary to make us happy here is a television. In answer to the question of what a person needs in order to be happy, 68% mentioned, among other things, “the telly/the tube“ – Understandable, when you consider the superior programming of our TV-landscape.

People, we can put whatever kind of spin on it we want to, the fact remains that we are just like our John in Luck at the beginning of his story. We think that happiness lies in that which we can attain or in what we have, what we can own. But I barely get one thing before I need more. We hardly have one desire fulfilled when here comes the next one already. We want more and more, and we always want that which we don’t have in order to finally be happy. In our search for happiness we humans are insatiable. We don’t live, rather we constantly hope that we will live sometime. Are you familiar with this feeling? – Yes, and if happiness doesn’t simply fall into my lap, then I will just squeeze it out of this life. From party to party, from pill to pill, Ecstasy high and drinking binge – by the way, you find the happiest people, so they say, at the Octoberfest.
However, happiness cannot be boozed or bought, not simply acquired; you can’t swallow it or hammer it in with the beat of the music – real happiness in life can only exist when our lives have found their true meaning. And we ourselves cannot give meaning to our lives, on the contrary, that comes from God. Because life itself comes from God.

This young man discovered that too. His name is Josh Davis. Eight years ago at the Olympic Games in Atlanta he won three gold medals for the USA in swimming. Josh was more successful than almost any other athlete. A happy young man – so it seemed. But Josh was never really happy. He had indeed won everything but had gained nothing. There he stood, at the top, but still not at the goal. “At some point it simply has to be possible to be satisfied with yourself and what you have accomplished”, Josh said of himself during the course of his swimming career. He describes how he felt then:

“When I achieved my first successes, the professionals started to take notice of me. By the end of my schooling I had gained recognition as a swimmer. In my first year at university I was able to prove my accomplishments. My name was well-known on campus. As time went by I became hooked on the feeling of wanting to be the best. But something was missing. The alcohol and the women couldn’t fill the emptiness inside me. Times come when you are not the best. The emptiness that you feel then weighs more heavily on you than everything else that came before. Swimming was my god – I searched for my personal worth in swimming. ‘When you swim well, you will be happy’, I thought.”

Josh’s inner emptiness didn’t decrease no matter how successful he was. No “dream lady” could make it better and no prize money filled the gap. The turning point came when he discovered that only God Himself can fill up the emptiness. As he committed his life to Jesus, his whole life perspective changed and took on new meaning. Now he no longer had to base his self-worth on his success in swimming. Josh says: “As God opened my heart and gave me the courage to face His truth, it became clear to me that I didn’t have to set any records in order to be loved and accepted. I am already loved and accepted by God, who created me. I now know where I come from and where I am going. I can live a happy and fulfilled life today because of this knowledge. Now my life has a purpose.” (Source: "Prio", the magazine of "Athlete calling athlete")

What we are actually looking for in our pursuit of happiness is significance and fulfilment for our lives. I mean, you live maybe 70, 80 years. You spend 22 of those years sleeping, 17 years working, 10 years of leisure time activities; you invest 7 years in watching television, 4 years eating, a half-year each for sports and sex, and even for tying shoes, each person spends approximately another 4 days. At least according to these statistics from the USA. And that’s all there is then?

That’s not very much; Richie probably thought so too. Richie lives on the sunny side of life. He comes from a good background, had a really nice childhood, intact family, parents are okay. There was church every Sabbath and Richie was always there. Sometimes he did get bored, but religion is important. He had learned that. And learning wasn’t hard for him either. He was, after all, intelligent and hardworking, yes, he was
even rather ambitious. Richie tries to keep his motivation up and won't allow a "no-future" attitude to control him; no, he’s going to make something of himself. Not that he was fixated on a career, no, but to be good, that was what he wanted, and that in every area. For happiness comes to those who are good and capable. Or so he thought. And in reality, Richie was successful. He didn’t have to deal with any money problems. Whatever he wanted, he could afford it. What a great feeling! He would have won every card game: “That is my car, that is my house, that is my boat...”. A genuinely lucky guy, the dream of every mother-in-law. The ideal of the modern young man, youthful, dynamic, successful and yet respectable. Ultimately he relies on good values: faithfulness, family, honesty, living responsibly; he is not attracted to greed, God is definitely cool. Yes, what more could you want? If you have something, then you are something!

Yes, and our Richie, he is something – that is, he’s not happy. Our Richie feels exactly like Josh Davis. Even though they had worked hard at being successful and were doing so much towards achieving a career and happiness, investing and possessing so much, these two were still feeling like so many other people, maybe like you too – they were feeling this void within. And wherever this emptiness is present, ultimately, everything in life is meaningless. What does this all mean then? Richie asked himself that also. What must I still do then, what do I still have to achieve in life, in order to finally fill the vacuum in my heart with meaning and happiness? He didn’t have an answer to this question.

But maybe this Jesus. People are talking about him everywhere. And Richie is impressed by what is being said about Him. He notices, Jesus is not just one who puts on an act, He’s not a chatterbox speaking empty words; what this Jesus says, is right on target, it cuts to the heart of the matter. And precisely there, in the heart, is where Richie senses that something is missing. In spite of wealth and a good reputation, Richie feels empty inside. Always doing, doing, working, striving – great – and then? I mean, what good is all the money, the career and the good reputation, when you really have no answer for the meaning of life; when your longing for an authentic life remains unfulfilled and death is your final prospect?

The Bible tells us in the Gospel of Matthew how Richie comes to Jesus with this question. Matthew 19, v.16: “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” What must I do, so that my life truly takes on meaning and perspective? What all must I still do, so that I can find fulfilment in my life? You know, I am really ready to do whatever it takes so that my life is genuinely successful and I can be happy.

So there stands Richie in excited suspense. His eyes are shining with curiosity. His notebook and pen are pulled out and ready. Ready to take note of the good Teacher’s instructions. He has already written the title on the top of the page and underlined it: “The Formula for Eternal Life” – or maybe better yet: This is how to live forever! – Now then, let’s go, good Teacher. I’m all ears.

But then Jesus reacts in a completely unexpected way. Instead of happily patting him on the shoulder – “ah, finally someone who wants to know” – he answers, short and crisp: v. 424 of the Bible...
“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good, and that is God. If you want to enter eternal life, obey the commandments of God.”

“Good Teacher, what good thing must I do“. Yes, about being good... that’s quite a different matter. Jesus encounters here two misunderstandings from us humans. First: Only God is truly good. Jesus is too great to simply be shoved into our drawer labelled “good Teacher”.

A lot of people do that. I mean, many people, those who have studied independently and those who claim to not believe in anything, say: Oh, this Jesus was a very interesting teacher. Did a few great things. Yes, he was a good person. As far as I’m concerned, he was a hippy philosopher or a hobby prophet. An idealistic do-gooder, today he would probably be a leading activist in the peace movement or an opponent of globalisation. Taking part in Greenpeace. Or maybe even the director of a retirement home – at least that’s what one could sometimes think when looking at Christian churches. Jesus however, clearly, was wholly good.

But you know what? Jesus wants to be more for you than just “good” in your eyes. Jesus is too great for your drawers labelled “good” and “bad” – Jesus is more than simply good. God is perfect. Richie stands face to face with God’s Son!

It’s a great misunderstanding to think that you could make Jesus so small and manageable – user-friendly – that you could file Him away in the small religious drawer of your life. Someone whom you can pull out of your handbag or backpack now and then when you once again need some advice for dealing with life. Jesus is infinitely greater than you can imagine. He doesn’t just simply integrate Himself into your small existence. Like the motto: a little bit of Jesus is quite nice.

Ok, ok, but tell me now, what good thing must I do. What do I still need to have a real life? And this is where misunderstanding number two comes in: Being happy in life works a little differently than we think it does. We tend to think, if you accomplish something, then you’ll get something in return. The concept of all the religions in this world. And Jesus challenges precisely this misunderstanding.

You want to do something in order to get eternal life? You want to be good? – Yes, Sir! – Then keep the commandments. – Period. v. 18 – 20: ...Jesus replied: “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother, and love your neighbour as yourself.” “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” the young man wanted to know.

Richie is somewhat surprised. Yes, but I’ve been doing all those things all along, since I was little. I have always done what I was supposed to. Keep the commandments? That’s it? But I’m already doing that: don’t steal, well yeah, the few pieces of candy from the department store are hardly worth mentioning – don’t lie, oh, if I ever did lie, it was always harmless but necessary because of the situation – don’t commit adultery, yes of
course, I’m still too young for that – honour my mom and dad and respect older folks, sure, after all, I pay their pension – don’t kill, yes now it’s getting really easy, or does that apply to mosquitoes also?

But so goes it, many people are like Richie, you too maybe. We overestimate ourselves. Actually I only have to do just a very little bit in order to go to heaven.

You know, the problem with Richie, our wealthy young friend, consists precisely therein, that he was a “good” person. Naturally it is right and important to do good things, to follow God’s commandments. Only, we can’t earn or work our way to heaven by doing this. God had created us as sinless beings, but ever since we humans separated ourselves from God, we can no longer escape from sin. We can really try, strive and struggle, put forth a lot of effort. Are you familiar with the carnival game where you test your strength by hitting a lever with a sledgehammer, trying to make the ball reach the top of the post where it strikes a bell? Richie is essentially just such an “I can do it in my own strength” type of guy. Like most people are. Or like our Josh was.

God is there, up above then. Or we could also say that up above means sinless, heaven, eternal life. That is where our Richie longs to be. Rightly so, for that is where we belong. Down below therefore signifies total sinfulness and death. Richie believes that he is lacking only a little bit before he will reach the goal up above. He is a good person. Do you know good people too? Let’s name a few: Mother Theresa, Ghandi, Martin Luther King, etc. Take Mother Theresa for example, was she sinless? Hardly; she herself, in spite of her self-sacrificing life of service for the weakest members of society, identified herself as a sinner. So then, what score would we give her? Maybe 85%. By way of contrast, let’s look at Marc Dutroux, the child molester. What would we give him? Maybe about 5%. Now then, when we look at that, where would Richie be classed? Where would you class yourself? 50, 60, 70% or higher still? How good are you? What must you still do, in order to make it to heaven?

You know, that isn’t such a nice little game. We humans really do function just like Richie. We think that heaven opens itself to the self-made man. To the man who is good enough and who forcefully puts all his efforts into it. All religions think this way. The way to karma is through reincarnation, climbing from one level to the next. If you die in the Holy War with a bomb strapped to your waist, then you have earned your way into heaven. Pray the rosary daily. Accomplish something, and you’ll get something for it. So then: I don’t lie (strike the lever with the hammer). I don’t steal (hammer strike). I don’t covet (hammer), I’m not envious (hammer). My thoughts are pure (hammer). I am good (hammer) and friendly (hammer). I fast (hammer), meditate (hammer), eat a vegan diet (hammer). I am righteous! (hammer) – I give up!!
still this emptiness inside me, nevertheless my life has no perspective, nevertheless everything is so meaningless. “What then must I still do?”

Jesus wants to lead Richie back to ground zero. To the point in his life where he realises, all his efforts, all his success, all his “being good”, all his wealth – none of it brings fulfilment. We cannot work our way to heaven and thereby also work out the meaning of life. The concept of the self-made man doesn’t ring true. It isn’t the frantic attempt to have it all and to move forward that leads to the goal, rather it is in letting go and stepping back. Listen to what Jesus says next:

V. 21-22: Jesus answered: "If you want to be perfect [and have eternal life], go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven [that you will never lose]. Then come, follow Me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Well now, we’re not used to that. We always want to have a happy ending at the end of a story. But here it ended tragically.

Jesus takes aim at the tender spot in Richie, in you and in me. For us humans that means surrendering our competitive nature: Sell all that you have. That is not a call to poverty; no, what Jesus asks from Richie and also from you is just one thing: Let go of your own ideas regarding the concept of life and follow mine. Let go of that which hinders you from submitting yourself completely to God. For you won’t find happiness, the meaning of life, or eternal life in the things of this world, nor in “being good”, but rather only in connection with, in a relationship with Jesus. You will find a real, authentic life only when you commit your life to Jesus.

But Richie can’t let it go. He would rather hang on to success, career, the good life and his wealth, but he thereby misses out on the turning point of his life. I can do it all by myself. What remains is the emptiness. Sadly he goes away. “Sell everything” – Jesus says. And suddenly you are afraid that you will lose something. Our super swimmer Josh Davis had this fear too. But if you take the chance, like Josh did, to entrust your life to Jesus, your God and Creator, you will not lose everything, rather you will win everything. Your life will be truly good with Him. Therefore, give your life to Jesus. Sell the false concept of life that you have, that which binds you and separates you from God, and open yourself up to God’s leading. God gives salvation, He doesn’t demand it. Jesus has paid for your life, for your eternal life, you must simply commit yourself to Him. You can do that today – and do you know what? With Jesus the ball stays up and rings the bell at the top! What good fortune!

Link2Life 2004, Sermon 6: Sex sells – But you can't buy love

Imagine, if you will, that you have come to a country where you can fill a theatre full of people simply by placing a covered platter in the middle of the stage. As you ever so slowly lift the cover off the platter, the audience watches mesmerised, staring at the plate, panting and drooling just to get a look at what lies underneath – a big piece of meat.
Wouldn’t you think that something had gone wrong with the human appetite for nourishment in this country? And now imagine that you live in a country in which billions of Euros are being spent just to see or get some naked skin. – Hasn’t something gone totally wrong there with human sexuality?

The Olympic games took place in Athens this summer. The Olympics, a festival of nations that stands for the highest athletic achievements, male and female athletes in friendly competition to prove their abilities. But nowadays true success is no longer measured solely on the athletic achievements that have been attained. No, true success is measured in terms of sex appeal. Hundredths of seconds, centimetres and scored points seem to be of less interest than the beautiful body that makes the accomplishment. The old Olympic motto: “citius, altius, fortius”, faster, higher, stronger, is newly interpreted today as “firmer, sharper, more revealing”. A prime example of this is beach volleyball. Did you know: The female athletes have to appear in the skimpiest of bikinis. The regulations stipulate that bikini briefs may not be any wider than 5 centimetres at the side, all sense of shame aside. Surveys have ultimately revealed that 85% of all male viewers are much less interested in watching the ball than they are in watching the action of the female bodies. In many types of sports the “dress code” for both women and men allows for an ever increasing glimpse into intimate areas; it’s simply good for business.

The fact is, athletes, especially female athletes, can more than double their degree of fame and popularity through “erotic appeal”. Anna Kurnikova, a Russian tennis player, has never won an important tournament and is rated number 200 on the world ranking list, yet she is one of the top income earners in women’s tennis. Sports figures, male as well as female, remove their already-sparse clothing and take part in erotic photo shoots. From volleyball and hockey to sword fencing, German athletes appear naked in Playboy.

Sex sells. – People, our world is living in a nudity craze! Business is booming for the “bare body” industry. Or why do you think the number of sex-related websites in the Internet has increased 20-fold to a full 260 million in the last six years? – Something is definitely wrong here!

Or have we already gotten used to it? Sex and eroticism are certainly omnipresent in the advertising industry. And according to one study 83% of all TV programs contain some form of sexual subject matter. Take the topic of sex away from the music industry and they would no longer know what to sing about.—Speaking of the music industry. What do you do when you want to draw attention to yourself? You have three guesses. “Use sex.” At the Super Bowl, the American football championship game, Janet Jackson lets Justin Timberlake tear open the upper part of her outfit. Outraged, she shows her bare breast to the public. Naughty Justin! The incident draws major publicity in the USA and develops into the so-called Nippelgate. The Internet is flooded with search queries for Janet. The interest in Jackson’s breast exceeds even the terrorist attacks of September 11. And oh what a coincidence; shortly thereafter, Janet Jackson’s new CD appears on the market.
It is very obvious that we live in an extremely sexualised society. There is hardly an area of our lives that is not affected by it. And the fashion industry supports this trend. Everything is getting shorter, tighter. Pants barely cover the private areas of the body. Public schools have to ban the wearing of thong underwear underneath tight, skimpy pants. You have to be sexy nowadays. Because your value as a person is based more and more on your “desirability factor”. That applies to men as well. You’re only valuable if you’re sexy and desirable. In the general competition for attention, the following motto applies: “Whoever offers more!”—Yes, something has gone terribly wrong!

A year ago I traveled from Frankfurt to Basel after attending a conference. Near Freiburg the train trip came to an end. A strong thunderstorm had interrupted my journey. I was transported by bus to the German train station in Basel. From there I took the streetcar to the Swiss train station. There were three boys and two girls directly behind me. They were all about 15 years old, and they were giggling and talking about sex. The boys were hitting on the girls and the girls were teasing the boys. Eventually they began to swap ideas about what they considered “sexy” and what all they had already done. “Oh, stop pretending”, sneered one of the boys, making fun of one of the girls, “you know you’re still a virgin”. “No, I am not”, she said, defending herself. And so it went back and forth, until finally shortly before the bunch climbed out of the streetcar, the girl said, “Hey, should I do it with you now right here?”

It’s just crazy, but it wasn’t so long ago that being a virgin was still a matter of honour; is it something to be ashamed of today? No, that’s just not right. Your sexuality is not a luxury food item with an expiration date; the earlier you open it, the fresher it is. On the contrary, your sexuality is the most intimate gift you have for your future husband or your future wife for your life together. The more pure and unused that you can present it, the more beautiful it is. Do you understand, sexuality is the most intimate language of love that you possess. You know, you carry the responsibility not only for your own sexuality but also for that of your partner. How you present and use your body really matters. Woman, man, don’t let yourself be diminished! Don’t make yourself an object! – Sex sells, to be sure, but you’re selling yourself at the same time!

Because, hey, sex is not a game, sex is not advertising material, and it’s especially not an item for sale. Your sexuality is not something to be tossed around freely, even if the times in which we are living are telling you otherwise. For you are too valuable to cheapen yourself in this way. And your future husband or your future wife is too valuable that you should present yourself to them as “used goods”.

The only person with whom I have ever had sex (and still have) is my wife. Do you think that since we didn’t have sex with other people before we got married, we didn’t know what to do or we didn’t have any imagination? Do you really believe, the more experience you’ve had, the less boring that will make it? Or do you really think it is important to find out whether you are compatible with each other in the sexual realm before getting married? People, our problems with sexuality and partnership have nothing to do with whether two people are sexually compatible “down there”, but rather with the fact that there is so much that isn’t right “up here”, in our minds.
The sexuality of young people nowadays is like a Formula 1 race car shortly before the start of the race. The motor has already been running and has heated up nicely. The media, Bravo magazine, films, yes, our entire sexualised environment has already provided for the “warm up”. The idling motor is already revving up nicely. Only you don’t actually know for sure how exactly to drive this thing. There are gears somewhere, oh yes, there is a clutch too. When to step on the gas and when to brake is not really clear either. Then too, the steering mechanism is actually missing as well. Someone gives the green light and you simply take off. Going much too fast, you can’t manage the gear shifting either, and since there is nothing to steer with, you can’t keep the well-built race car on the track. Instead of reaching the finish line, you remain on the open stretch and cause one accident after another.

I’m telling you, according to statistics, kids are experiencing their “first time” at an ever younger age. They’re also getting pregnant at a younger age. In spite of sex education and contraceptives, there are 20,000 teenage pregnancies each year in Germany. The number of abortions has doubled to 761 for girls under the age of 14. I read some moving personal experience stories on an Internet site about teenage pregnancies, that is to say, about children who are having children. Whether it be Andrea, Isy, Layla or Mia, at the age of 15 or 16, either becoming a mother or having an abortion. Weighed down by guilt and deeply hurt. – And it all began because someone showed some interest in them. That cute boy in the tenth grade. One of my brother’s friends. The nice guy at the fun drinking party.

Someone was actually interested in me. People, this is exactly where the heart of the matter lies. What we are really looking for is warmth, security and caring. And we think that sex will simply fulfil our deep need for closeness and intimacy. Simply let go and “just do it”. But that just doesn’t work. Sex is indeed the most intimate language of love. But without a mature love relationship between two people, sex lacks meaning. In such a case, love is indeed made but not lived and given as a gift. And where this mature love is absent, control is also absent. For when love is missing, sex becomes nothing but technique – “Was I good?” When love is missing, sex becomes a product. When love is missing, sex becomes a matter of selfish pleasure, a “one-night-stand”. That’s just self-gratification with the help of another person. You know, a fulfilling sexuality can only be given, not taken and certainly not bought.

That is to say, sexuality is a gift, your gift – and the one who gave it to you is your Creator. So let me tell you this very clearly: Sex is divine! And you may by all means take that to mean two different things. I mean, God is not a prude. After all, He created us as sexual beings. The fact that we are equipped differently is not a result of God’s inability to decide on just one variety of human being. We aren’t androgynous single-cell organisms, nor self-reproducing vegetables, and we aren’t instinct-driven herd animals that follow breeding season times. No, sex is beautiful, exciting and pleasurable and intended to be exactly so. Sexuality is not a special talent that is possessed by only a few among us. God has designed it so that sexuality awakens in each one of us at some point and our bodies develop their sexual maturity. It’s normal for boys to come to the place where they stop seeing girls as silly and boring, and for girls to start wanting to be around
the boys. Thus the desire for the opposite sex and for sexual fulfilment is good and ordained by God. Nothing has gone wrong with our sexuality, but rather with the way we handle it.

The sex business is booming, sex tourism is flourishing, worldwide child pornography rings, high numbers of child abuse – We don’t seem to be managing our sexuality well at all. Our deep need for closeness and intimacy has been shattered. And we have completely misunderstood what sex is all about. Sex is about giving yourself completely to the other person, the pleasurable experience of the most intimate trust, devotion and commitment within the framework of a binding partnership. You can only give yourself completely to another person with all that you have and all that you are, when you have fully promised yourself to that person, unreservedly united in faithfulness and love. This covenant of love is called marriage!

Do you understand that we are made for relationships. God created us as man and woman, as partners for life. It is because of this that we desire closeness, warmth, security, love, tenderness and a deep bond. But since we have pulled away from God, we distance ourselves from each other also. However, this yearning within us remains. This desire for closeness, for another human being, who is completely on your side, whom you can totally trust. This desire for warmth and security, for another person, with whom you can feel at home because he understands you. It is this longing for love and a deep bond, simply to be loved, respected and valued for your own sake. Intimacy. I belong to you, you belong to me. But if we look out at the “relationship jungle“ of our world, we realise that we can no longer deal with our yearning appropriately. And maybe you don’t even have to look that far away from yourself.

It seems to be the case now that more and more young people have a big love deficit. Broken families. Father or mother are known only by hearsay. The career is more important than the child. When you come home from school, nobody is ever there. There is a large number of emotionally and spiritually orphaned children. And the absolute worst thing of all, children are being abused by their parents and close friends or family. Even as children, our desire for love is not fulfilled or is trampled underfoot. So at an early age something within us breaks down. And later we throw ourselves into relationships, one after another. Each one ends in heartache, leaving behind deep imprints in our souls. For “you are never so vulnerable as when you love“, according to Sigmund Freud, and he was right. It is precisely in matters of love where we get hurt the most.

I assume that you know Detlef Soost, called Dee. He was asked in an interview why he never has a lasting relationship, that is, why he hops from one woman to another. He says the following: “In the past I was rejected or abandoned again and again, or at least that’s how I perceived it. My father wasn’t there from the beginning because he took off right after I was conceived. Then my mother abandoned me for the first time because of her serious illness, [she was also addicted to alcohol and pills] and for the second time, when I went to a children’s home. Finally, she deserted me definitively when she died; I was 13 at the time. So I developed a defence mechanism for myself: Whenever things become too personal, I get the impression that I could be disappointed again. Thus, I would rather
do the disappointing myself.” – Disappointed love, what remains is sex. And so we are already in a vicious cycle. Too little love and closeness received, disappointment experienced – and what do we do, we pass the disappointment on. How often have you already been disappointed in your young life?

You know, we have lost contact with the source of love, with God and thereby also the language of love because we have made everything revolve around just us. And what sin has destroyed in us cannot be compensated for with sex. Our need for love and closeness must be nourished through the love of God. His love makes us truly capable of loving. Mary experienced that too, at least probably that was her name. She took the whole “sex sells” thing literally. She was a well-known prostitute in the city. We don’t know what led her to this kind of life. A deficiency of love? Impaired relationships? Abuse? Or maybe she was simply disappointed by the men who always wanted only “one thing”, now at least they would have to pay for it. Disappointed love. No one simply throws herself away and sells herself. Becoming a prostitute was surely not the fulfilment of her girlhood dreams. To be sure, she drew the desirous glances of the men to herself, she knew how it was done. She got a lot of attention and self-affirmation in this way. But more and more she lost the respect of others as well as her self-respect. Well, her sex did indeed have a value – but she herself had long since lost hers. Mary sells herself in her search for love and recognition. What she finds is sex, naked skin, lust und many lovers. Only that unfulfilled yearning for love, closeness and security remains unquenched. Sex doesn’t make your life better or more bearable, and especially not sex at a young age!

But then she hears about Jesus. Which isn’t at all hard, since everyone on the street is talking about Him. This Jesus, whom people are badmouthing as a friend of “tax collectors and prostitutes”. Who doesn’t prejudge the people, but rather calls them all to Himself, so that they can discover that they are accepted and loved in the eyes of God. That it is God who gives them worth and value. And who fills us with His love. For it is only through and with His love that we can live love and quench the longing within us. And that must be exactly what happened to Mary. She probably had heard Jesus preach, had already come into contact with Him. Then something happens that totally changes her life. She lets God’s love, His closeness and warmth pierce her heart. This God who came to her through Jesus becomes the healing for her soul’s wounds. And then she hears that Jesus has been invited to dinner at Simon’s house. She leaves her place in the red light district and charges into the upper middle-class parlour where Jesus is.

(Jesus Film Clip, Zefferelli)

There is this Mary, no longer playing the role of the cool seductress. She doesn’t cover up her true feelings like she usually does. No, she lets them freely show. She cries out, releasing the burden from her soul. That which plagues her heart so deeply now comes to the surface, her utter desperation, all the wounds, the pain of her existence, all the disappointments and the whole load of baggage that weighs her down. Her unfulfilled search for true love. She doesn’t say a word. She is simply overwhelmed because she has gotten to know the God who doesn’t push her away and scorn her like so many others, like this Simon who is appalled by her. Jesus is not appalled. He knows exactly who she
is but does not despise her. Because Jesus gives her back her worth, because Jesus assures her of her immeasurable value, and accepts her as a child of God, she anoints his feet with costly oil. Up till now she had squandered her sexuality, yes, even her life for money, but now she invests her money, her life in the love of her God. For she has experienced liberation from all her shame and guilt. On that evening there at Simon’s Jesus said: “Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you.” Because Jesus paid for her sins once for all on the cross. He takes the burden of your life, too, upon Himself and gives you the love that you need for living. He has paid the price, don’t sell yourself to anyone else! Jesus is more than a good friend, He is a partner for life.

(Music)

Did you know that in the Bible God compares His love for us humans with the love between a husband and wife? Yes, He does. He is in love with you. And whoever opens himself up to God’s love will not be disappointed. He sticks by you. God is faithful. His love for you endures and will carry you. In the Bible there are these words that apply to you and me also: Isaiah / Chapter 54: 5, 10: “For your Maker is your husband – the Lord Almighty is His name – the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth ... Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”

Link2Life 2004, Sermon 7: Enjoy it! – Pure zest for life!

I have a really great colleague who comes from the northern part of Germany. With a proud, puffed-out chest, he likes to say, “Where I come from, that’s way up in Germany, at the very top!” Well, I don’t contradict him. I can understand it when someone from the flat lands reduces the concepts of up and down to the two dimensions seen on a map. But I’m from Switzerland, and my world is three-dimensional. In our country up really does mean up. And it’s a pleasure to be up at the top. Especially in the winter. You’re standing, for example, on a beautiful but mega steep slope that is deeply covered with powdery snow. The mountain will demand all that you’ve got, that’s for sure. A fall would be extremely unpleasant, but the sun is shining, the blue of the sky is as deep as the ocean, and you push off and swing yourself onto the slope. You rhythmically trace a path in the snow. Arriving at the bottom and looking back up, an appreciative smile crosses your face and you think: no risk, no fun!

Without risk there is no fun. That can also be pretty naïve. And it’s precisely the young people who often do everything with a vengeance. I’ve experienced that myself. I was about 17 years old at the time. Was looking for that special thrill away from the normal ski run. I mean, barriers and warning signs aren’t obstacles, rather they’re invitations. A slope of deep snow just like in picture books, without any tracks. So it was my premiere. I push off onto the slope. Push one, two, three – but I can’t stop the fourth push. Because now the entire slope is sliding with me. I have triggered a small avalanche. Thankfully I was way up at the top and could still just barely navigate away from the sliding
mountainside. As a general rule, a slab of avalanching snow is deadly. No risk, no fun—what nonsense.

Yet that is exactly what seems to be the actual life maxim of your generation today. The main thing is to have fun. Indeed, the so-called “fun sports” are booming. For “boarders”, for example, there’s not only snowboarding and skateboarding, no, there’s also wakeboarding, mountain boarding, grass boarding, all-terrain boarding. The palette for bikers, surfers, jumpers, climbers is also almost limitless. After all, people today are fit for fun. ‘Cause we have to have fun! And so we live in extremes. Sure, my heart was pounding like mad too as I watched the mass of snow that I had unleashed gain momentum. The adrenaline rushes were fierce and the moment extremely intense. But isn’t something out of sync here if this is the only way that I can really feel alive?

The party alone isn’t enough, we also need Alco pops and party drugs. Fun has to reign supreme, and if necessary, coupled with violence too. There are indeed young people who have fun simply by engaging in violence. In our fun society and event-oriented culture everything is ultimately measured according to whether it is fun. For life may be anything, just not boring.

The driving force behind our so hectic leisure time behaviour is actually exactly that—the fight against boredom. And so we pack as much as we possibly can into our free time, so that we won’t miss out on anything: Doing something every evening: Off to the theme park and a visit to the movies, at three different parties on Friday, and going somewhere on the weekend—please just not that one thing, boredom.

I don’t know if the name Janis Joplin means anything to you. She is considered to be the best white (female) blues singer up until today, and she belongs to the time period when the fun society experienced its actual birth. The wild years of the 60s. She gave us the motto: “Live fast, love hard, die young”. And she meant it seriously. She didn’t just set off an avalanche with her excessive lifestyle, no, she plunged right into it also; she was dead at the age of 27. At the explicit request of Joplin, her entire fortune, which admittedly was no longer very much, was wasted on booze at a party of 200 of her friends after her death. She lived intensely, for the moment, squeezed everything out of life for a little bit of fun. “Better to have ten hyper-great years than to be sitting in a recliner at the age of 70, senile and staring at the TV,” she said. That sounds quite familiar even today.

Julia is 15 and says in the book “generation-kick.de”: “I always need a thrill. Every young person is like that. That’s just part of life for us. A thrill is dangerous, something secret or forbidden. Your heart has to drop into your stomach, you begin to tremble or break out in a cold sweat, your pulse is at 500. It has to be life-threatening. I have to know that something or other can happen there. But in spite of that I need to also know, that there is nothing so bad about it that it can end fatally or change the rest of my life. It is almost like an addiction. If young people don’t have any thrills, they’re not enjoying their life to the full. What stories will they have to tell later then?”
Now, I realise that not all youths think like this. And a certain amount of risk-taking behaviour is typical for young people. We are on a search, looking for our own personal boundaries. But the willingness of young people to take risks is increasing rapidly and gaining strength. In traffic, in sports, with regard to sex, in dealing with addictive drugs and so on. Experts talk about "sensation seeking", the search for experience and excitement and increased desire for risk. Prevention of extreme boredom is what that is. And even if you don’t exactly live extremely, aren’t you more afraid of boredom than you are of risk?

But it’s a paradox, the more intensely I live, the extremer I am, the more fun I seek, the less of it I find. That’s like the racing hound, chasing after the stuffed rabbit that is pulled along in front of his nose: the faster he runs, the faster the rabbit is pulled away from him. The sociologist Gerhard Schulze says about this: “We raise the frequency of experience in the hope that we will thereby have more moments of happiness and more fun, but we simply end up losing the depth of the individual experience.” That means that the individual experience actually becomes more and more boring. And because the individual experience no longer yields anything, I simply need more and more intense experiences and indeed more and more quickly. Are you familiar with that?

Our life in the present-day event culture and consequently our constant search for fun is actually just a sign that we can hardly find what we are truly looking for anymore: Namely, the pure joy of living. And that is exactly what God really wants to give us.

Oh, yeah sure, it was bound to happen. First of all, badmouthing the “fun society”, in order to then talk about this heavenly spoilsport-killjoy. In our search for amusement we perceive God as a nuisance, I know. But we have misunderstood something there. God is no spoilsport. The search for fun in life is not automatically wrong. Yes, life should be fun. Or do you think, when God perfectly created the world, every living thing and us humans, He also created the perfect boredom, the absolute joylessness? Hardly likely.

What do you think, why did God give you your mind? Your imagination and creativity. The adrenaline and the joy you feel from movement. God is not boring. Your life is such a miracle, such a gift, you’re supposed to enjoy it. You should delight in your life because your life is worth it.

There is a book in the Bible called “Ecclesiastes”. It was written by someone who can’t be beat when it comes to wisdom – King Solomon. His profound insight into life was world-renowned. He had asked God for it. And look now at what God had taught him about life. This is what he says: Eccl 3:12–13: “So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.” (NLT)

There is nothing better than to be glad and to enjoy life. That is wisdom. The Bible doesn’t call us to a joyless life. That might come as a surprise if you look at certain Christians. There are in fact people who seem to convey this message. Laughing is unchristian and fun is worldly. But self-imposed suffering, that’s godly. Except that isn’t
really God’s opinion. God doesn’t condemn fun in and of itself. If you have something to eat and to drink, work to do, and you’re healthy, then be happy, Solomon is saying here. Enjoy the good things that you have. Don’t make a grab for more and more. Enjoy your life as a gift from God.

Having celebrations, being together with friends, eating well, playing, being in high spirits, now that’s living the good life. Experiencing nature in a variety of ways is really cool. I have the most fun engaging in sports activities too – preferably in the mountains. Personally, I really like the so-called fun sports. I mean, what’s the point of just observing the perfect wave but not riding it. Enjoy your life now during your youth. You’re only young once. Solomon says that too in the Bible. A little further on he writes:

Ecclesiastes / Chapter 11:9 “Young people, it’s wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.” (NLT)

Wow, it says there in the Bible: Do and allow, what you want – just have fun! But then the glowing radiance freezes on your face. Here comes this “But”. First you get all excited and warmed up, only then to be doused with cold water. The big finger is pointing at you: “But be aware, God will hold you accountable for everything you do.” Oh, great. The party is over. The fun has been spoiled. The boredom is back again.

But, hey. That isn’t what it says there. Solomon doesn’t want to trick you. “Enjoy life, have fun – BUT!” It’s completely logical actually. True joy, genuine fun can only happen where you are able to take responsibility for it. Where you can’t harm your own life or the lives of others. It’s just logical. God is not a killjoy, He simply doesn’t want your fun to ruin you! I mean, what kind of fun is that, to leave the ski run only to then suffocate in the avalanche? What kind of fun is that, when the joy in living can only be expressed through a drunken stupor? What kind of fun is that, when in the course of having this fun, I kick somebody else in the teeth. What kind of fun is that, when I stagger through the days in a drugged-out haze or no longer make the curve while street racing?

There is no life without responsibility; whoever thinks that way, lives irresponsibly – and that’s supposed to be fun? Just how is sin supposed to be fun when it’s sin that destroys us? How is that fun, when you thereby gamble with your own life? And what good is your life, when you have to reduce it to just having fun?

Solomon is wise. He just wants to see you happy – and indeed for all eternity. For you will reap what you sow – sooner or later. He who lives his life without God will reap life without God, and that is death. But he who lives his life with God will also reap life with God – and that will be fun for eternity. And you know, this is precisely where the big difference lies.

Our fun society reflects our hunger for happiness in life. But we don’t find it apart from God. Life has no perspective then. Senile at age 70, sitting in the recliner in front of the TV, no, live fast, love hard, die young! Get something out of your short life, as long as
there is something to get. Is life just a struggle for work and a little money? I would rather live life to the fullest, come what may. With the ecosystem soon to collapse and the huge wave surging over me? Then let’s have fun, as long as we still can! Somehow we still have to be able to get some life out of all this emptiness. Do you also just live from weekend to weekend? Or does all your fun simply serve to push all the bad stuff in this world, your world, into the background? Fun as a displacement tactic? Are you living in a “fun spiral” because there is actually nothing else going on in your life?

You know, I am convinced that you can only truly enjoy your life before you die if your life has perspective – beyond your death. For real happiness in life doesn’t consist in frantically trying to get some fun out of your life here. Pure joy in life consists in being able to experience fun, even if it’s fleeting, because you have already gained life.

That’s like this story that Jesus told us and that Mark had sung about. This young man asked to receive his inheritance and then left his family home. Off into the big, wide world in search of fun. And he found fun in wine, women and song. He paid for it all too. His homelessness and his inner emptiness have been suppressed. “Live fast, love hard.” But somewhere along the line the party was over. His funds had run out at some point. Now the “die young” part really could happen. Because he has landed in with the pigs. But he began to think hard and returned to his father. Went back home! And what did his father do? Jesus tells it: Luke / Chapter 15:20–24: “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.”

Regarding the father in the story, Jesus is talking about our Father in heaven and regarding the son, he means you and me. And He is waiting for you to come back to Him. And when you come home, only then does the fun really begin! Then the party starts! Do you understand, God is not against fun, joy and light heartedness – quite the opposite. He just doesn’t want your little bit of earthly fun to end up costing you your life. The real “life party” belongs to him who comes home, and God paid with His life for this fun.

You know, true happiness in life is not something that is dependent on alcohol or the rhythm of the bass drum, on powder snow or a sandy beach, but rather on whether you are with the Father. Whether God’s love is embracing you. From this love, a deep joy for living grows that takes precedence over every situation in life. You have arrived at home, regardless of what happens. Whether you are doing good or not. I mean, our life doesn’t consist of just fun. Being happy when everything is going smoothly doesn’t take any effort at all. But try carrying your “have fun” message to the Third World. Or stop by the cancer ward. Or maybe you don’t even need to look any farther than your own home. Yes, our lives have their dark sides too. Thanks to sin. But when your life is anchored in God, He takes your life’s burdens from you, He welcomes you with open arms and you
belong to Him, then your life will have a joy that you don’t have to produce from outside yourself, rather it comes from deep in your heart – even in difficult times. It was exactly this kind of joy that Kim Phuc experienced too. Today she is 40 years old.

Back then she was nine. On the 8th of June 1972, American “sky raiders” flew over the village of Trang Bang, engaging in a devastating napalm assault. “Everything went according to plan.” This photo wasn’t planned. It went around the world and still has an effect even today. In the middle of the screaming children, Kim Phuc, the naked little girl. Someone had torn the burning clothes off her body; her scream is not only one of terror but also of pain. Back, neck and arms are burned. Kim’s cry moves the world and gives witness to the senselessness of the Vietnam War. Kim herself spends the next 14 months in the hospital. Her life is scarred. Her plans ruined. 17 more operations followed. She has to discontinue her schooling several times, can hardly concentrate. She cannot get away from the pain. She finds comfort in the Bible. She hears about the Father who is calling her home. She hears about Jesus who loves her and carries her. That gives her strength for living. Instead of allowing herself to be eaten up with hate and self-pity, she finds a new life of happiness. On the 11th of November 1996 she speaks in Washington in front of thousands of Vietnam War veterans, her former enemies. And talks about forgiveness and joy. She also says that she forgives the pilot who dropped the bombs on her village. Picture and sound recording

What Kim didn’t know was that the pilot was standing in the crowd. John Plummer was the officer-in-charge and pilot for that attack. He gave the order to drop the bombs that brought the fire into Kim’s life. But the image of the screaming girl burns in his soul. It’s already in the press the next day. “When I saw it, all I could do was fall on my knees, and I realised that I would never be able to get this scene out of mind”, he wrote. Three marriages, two divorces and a serious problem with alcohol caused by the guilt feelings and nightmares that plagued him – for some 24 years. That was his life after the war. Until he couldn’t take it anymore: The screaming little girl had burned herself deeply into his heart.

In 1996 John Plummer saw a report on the television about the “napalm girl”. For the first time he learned what had happened to her in later years – that she was still alive and now lived in Toronto (Canada) with her husband and their children. He also finds out that Kim is supposed to give a talk on Vietnam Veterans Day. President Clinton has invited her. John struggles with himself, but finally decides to go there. He wants to see Kim, the screaming girl in his soul. And then on that day Kim speaks joyfully about the necessity of peace, forgiveness and healing. And she addresses the pilot from that day long ago. For months John had prepared himself for this moment, but now he was overwhelmed. Away from the crowds he meets Kim. He looks into Kim’s eyes, but there is no longer any screaming. In all the hustle and bustle of the people we see the two of them kneeling on the ground. John describes it like this: “She saw my sorrow, my pain and my anguish. She stretched out her arms and hugged me. All that I could say over and over again was: ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry’. And she said over and over: ‘It’s all right’. Everything is okay, everything is okay. We could hardly pull ourselves away from the embrace. It was as if we had known each other our whole life. It was as if we were a brother and sister who see each other again after a long separation. It was there that the little girl’s scream fell silent
in me and my war was finally over. Kim and I have peace.” – John, too, is a Christian today. And when you see this picture of the two of them you can plainly sense their newly won happiness in living.

Do you understand that this is the basis of true joy in life. Being forgiven and reconciled with God and with each other. Kim and John are children of God. How do you think they both will celebrate at first, when they are finally at home with their Father? Their eternity will not be one of boredom. Rather the joy of living which surpasses everything else on this earth that offers us temporary pleasure. You know, there is a celebration of life with God and you can experience that even today.

Getting some fun out of life? Hey, when you have attained life, that’s when the real fun first begins. Just trust. You just have to risk taking a step toward Jesus. For this time it really is true: No risk, no fun!
APPENDIX O

FEEDBACK L2L 02/04 – MAILS FROM INDIVIDUALS AND LOCAL VENUES

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440
hatten, fand wir die Evangelisation sehr schön und bereichernd. Wir freuen uns schon auf die nächsten Abende!

25-1 Unser Wunsch wäre, dass die Vortragseinheit etwas abwechslungsreicher gestaltet würde und nicht so viel Sprache am Stück geboten wird (Einspielungen von Videoclips, Interviews, Illustrationen, Anspiele, Sketche, etc.

26-1 Wir sind nur eine kleine Gruppe in einem kleinen Ort, aber spätestens im November sind mehr Gäste da

27-1 Ich finde es richtig gut das Stefan bei den Verkündigungen immer Vergleiche zum heutigen Leben zieht und das er immer so lebensnahe Beispiele bringt! Weiter so! Was mir allerdings nicht gefällt ist das so viel geredet wird & man nur zuhören muss! Das mit dem Interview ist ziemlich langweilig! Könntet ihr nicht mehr solche Sachen einbauen wie das mit den Fernsehausschnitten! Oder irgendwas Lustiges, Anspiele, irgendwas mir mehr Bewegung! Ich glaube Jugendliche brauchen mehr Aktion und weniger Gerede! Und schließlich soll das ja eine Jugendevangelisation sein! (trotzdem ist das ganz genau so wie Net aufgebaut nur die Themen sind Jugendgerecht)! Die Musik ist auch ziemlich mäßig! Damit sprechen ihr nur einen ganz geringen Teil Leute an und Jugendliche die nichts mit Kirche zu tun haben erst Recht nicht! Das ganze braucht irgendwie mehr Pepp!


29-1 Musik (Matthias Hautsch) völlig unpassend... Auf der einen Seite wird davon gesprochen, dass die Musik die Jugendlichen ansprechen sollte, dann kommt Musik, die weniger Leute anspricht als Klassik (O-Ton)... Schade, dass Lieder wie "imagine theres no heaven" zu einem sonst wirklich guten Abend mit sehr guter Botschaft kommen... Bitte Matthias
Hautsch nicht mehr zu adv. Veranstaltungen einladen.

30-1 Alles in allem ganz in Ordnung. Nur am ersten Abend. die Musik war Atzend. Warum wurde nicht mal gemeinsam gesungen? Es gibt doch so viele tolle Lieder. Mitmachen ist angesagt!

31-1 Also ich bin vollends mit allem zufrieden... die Vorträge sind klasse. Allerdings finde ich wirkt das... ach wie haben wir alles so toll unter einem so großen Aufwand mit wieviel mühe...blablabla... ich denke das weiß jeder und es kann gezeigt werden... aber mal sollte es nicht übertrieben. Die Musik war bis jetzt nicht so mein ding... ich meine welcher Jugendlicher um die 18 hört Jazz? Das ist mehr die Minderheit. Die Jungs (weiß net mehr wie sie hießen) waren superklasse. Das ganze Programm ist doch bissl auf Aktion aus .. da hat das echt nicht reingepasst. Noja, die Übersicht für die Mitglieder finde ich sehr gut gemacht und überhaupt die ganze HP :) Also man sieht sich!


33-1 Hallo lieber Link2Life Team, die "message" war sehr gut!! Wirklich ein Lob an Sprecher und alle Beteiligten! Die Musikstücke, die angeboten wurden passten leider zu so einem geistlichen Programm nicht. Ich bin der Meinung, dass die Jugendlichen nicht die selbe bzw. ähnliche Musik wie sie in der Welt gewohnt sind bekommen sollen, sonder eine Andere nämlich das Gegenteil von dem was sie Tag für Tag hören. Es gibt sehr schöne besinnliche und für jede Jugend passende Musik. Es wäre schön, wenn beim nächsten Mal dies berücksichtigt wird. Danke!

Feedback L2L 2002 / 2. Evening: 12.10.2002

1-2 Interessantes Thema
2-2 leider weniger Besucher, aber ein Top Abend!
3-2 Das Programm kommt gut ´rückert´!
4-2 Auch wenn wir leider nicht ganz so viele Gäste unter uns hatten, so waren wir eine für unsere Konstanzer Verhältnisse (letztes Jahr waren wir gerade mal zu dritt!) sehr lippige Gruppe, deren teilweise gerade erst neu dazugekommen Jugendlichen an den beiden Abenden sehr gut zueinander gefunden hat. Nicht zuletzt hatte daran das wirklich hervorragende und uns allesamt sehr angesprochen habende Programm von L2L, besonders die Botschaft von Stephan Sigg, seinen Anteil. Wir sind Gott sehr dankbar für diese Abende und sind guten Mutes, dass wir auf Basis von L2L a) unsere Jugend noch besser zusammenschweißen können b) diese dann auch motiviert ist, Freunde aus dem Bekanntenkreis mitzubringen.
5-2 Der Abend war spitze und die Stimmung bei uns echt klasse!
6-2 Alles supi!! :-)  
7-2 die Predigt war zu lang
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Seite</th>
<th>Inhalt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-2</td>
<td>Verkündigung super ansprechend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-2</td>
<td>Musik war ok. jedoch zu wenig Abwechslung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-2</td>
<td>Jugend ist 2 Stunden vorher zum Bahnhof und hat persönlich eingeladen. Daher ca 30 Fremde.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-2</td>
<td>Der zweite Abend hat insgesamt überzeugt, auch die Musik, das Thema und die Moderation. Das Chatten war dann für Größe senden gut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-2</td>
<td>praise the LORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-2</td>
<td>die Message war sehr gut!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-2</td>
<td>auch &quot;jung gebliebene&quot; Erwachsene haben mit Neugier und Interesse teilgenommen und wurden von den Jugendlichen gut integriert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-2</td>
<td>Übertragung war besser als am 1. Abend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-2</td>
<td>Der zweite Abend war schon besser, aber: -Message bitte 10 Minuten kürzen -Pantomime, Sketch, Reality-Soap, Umfragen im Publikum, Videoclips mehr nutzen!!! - die Musik trifft bisher unsere Teens kaum: Jazz und Gospel. Welcher – der chartverwöhnten Teens hört sowas. Es gibt doch tolle christliche Hits. Leute, die man einladen sollte, auch wenn NET dann etwas teurer wird, z.B. Marlon, Glashaus, Ben und andere. - die Moderatoren wirken so fest an ihrem Platz stehend steif und monoton - mehr Bewegung bitte!!! &gt; - die Computerecke kommt unsicher rüber - die Kameraführung gerade dort ist eine mittlere Katastrophe-trotz allem, die Mühe zu verbessern, was am ersten Abend mies war, war zu erkennen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-2</td>
<td>Alle waren begeistert. Die Gäste wollen wiederkommen!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-2</td>
<td>Perfekt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-2</td>
<td>Gelungener Abend, gut gesprochen, Musik war lebendig und gut.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-2</td>
<td>Der Abend war echt total bereichernd und die Gäste haben sich sehr wohlgefühlt! &gt; Die Gruppe XSept war super!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-2</td>
<td>noch zu wenig interaktiv</td>
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<tr>
<td>23-2</td>
<td>War insgesamt mehr ansprechender!</td>
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<tr>
<td>24-2</td>
<td>Insgesamt von allen Altersgruppen ein supergutes Feedback! - Alle begeistert!</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-2</td>
<td>Die Musik des zweiten Abends war noch besser als am ersten. Auch die Message ist gut angekommen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-2</td>
<td>viele Jüngere aus der Gemeinde waren dabei- und begeistert!</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-2</td>
<td>Die Verkündigung fanden die Jugendlichen als sehr gut, nicht so glücklich, aber, waren sie mit der Musik.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-2</td>
<td>Es wird langsam</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-2</td>
<td>Die Musik hatte im Gegensatz zum Vortrag Melodie.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31-2</td>
<td>Insgesamt von allen Altersgruppen ein supergutes Feedback! - Alle begeistert!</td>
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<td>33-2</td>
<td>Ich konnte selbst leider nicht dabei sein, aber es scheint sonst gefallen zu haben.</td>
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<td>34-2</td>
<td>wieder tolle Atmosphäre :)</td>
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<td>35-2</td>
<td>Musik, Verkündigung und Interview waren wesentlich besser als beim ersten Abend</td>
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<td>36-2</td>
<td>deutlich weniger Gäste als am ersten Abend, hoffentlich lag’s nicht an der Musik :)</td>
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<td>37-2</td>
<td>schlechteste musikwahl und zu lange leider Gäste dadurch verloren. Thema gut und gut rübergebracht evtl. zu schwer für Neulinge.</td>
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wir müssen uns leider nochmals negativ über die Musik äußern. Nachdem die "Band" am ersten Abend schon voll daneben war, haben wir gehofft unsere Gäste wenigstens am 2. Abend nicht enttäuschen zu müssen. Aber das war leider auch wieder ein voller Reinfall. Wir finden, wenn auf den Einladungen groß mit Musik geworben wird, sollte man auch damit rechnen, dass Jugendliche zum Große teil auch deshalb zu den Veranstaltungen kommen. Wenn dann aber gleich am Anfang eine Gruppe wie X-sept auftritt, macht das einen TOTAL UNCOOLEN Eindruck. Das zieht die gesamte Veranstaltung runter. Sicher können X-Sept gut singen, gar keine Frage, jedoch sind sie für die Zielgruppe von Link2Life VOLLKOMMEN ungeeignet. Schon ihr Outfit war für jugendliche Verhältnisse echt out. Ich meine, welche Pop-, Rock- (oder was auch immer) -band tritt schon in normalen Jeans und weitem Pullover auf? Jugendliche gucken täglich MTV, VIVA u.a. und da sind sie wirklich anderes gewohnt. (Wenn das Outfit der Moderatoren (Anne-Kathrin sah wirklich super aus ;-) das Outfit der Band bei weitem übertrifft, sollte man da vielleicht schon mal drüber nachdenken, oder???) Man soll ja, Jugendliche erreichen, und die schauen nun mal zuerst aufs Äußere. Ich hoffe wirklich, dass die Musik beim nächsten mal RICHTIG GUT wird, denn es wäre wirklich peinlich, wenn wir unsere Gäste wieder mit "beim nächsten mal ist bestimmt was für euch dabei" vertrösten müssten. (Noch ein Tip: Jugendliche stehen heute auch nicht mehr primär auf POP, viele hören viel lieber HIP HOP, TECHNO oder ROCK (Linkin Park etc.), dass müsste man auch beachten. Also wenn man z.B. Normal Generation einlädt ist das schon ein großer Fortschritt, aber dann müsste das nächste mal vielleicht Hip Hop oder Rock gespielt werden, denn das spricht die männlichen Gäste mehr an, und es soll ja für jeden etwas dabei sein.) Noch was zur massage. Finden wir WIRKLICH SUPER. Aber wir finden auch, dass eine dreierteilte Stunde VIEL ZU LANG ist. Dazwischen müssten auf jeden Fall noch Sketche Videoclips etc. kommen. Was ist denn eigentlich so interaktiv an LINK2LIFE? Es wäre cool, wenn ihr noch irgendwelche Fragen stellt, auf die die Jugendlichen sofort antworten müssten. Die Antworten von allen Orten könntet ihr dann noch life in der Sendung auswerten. Das ist viel interessanter für die Jugendlichen, wenn sie sich so selbst mit einbringen können und wir als einzelne Jugendgruppen dann genannt werden. Also auf jeden Fall muss es noch um einiges interaktiver werden.


41-2 Ich bin echt beeindruckt, was ihr da auf die Beine gestellt habt!!! Hut ab vor euch!!! Und da ist ja auch noch Stephan-Du warst echt klasse!!! Du bist der geborene Redner!!!


43-2 das feedback von unserer seite: stephan ist wirklich super, allerdings haut uns das Rahmenprogramm nicht unbedingt um (sorry für diese sehr direkte rückmeldung) - die musik ist bisher ziemlich langweilig, wenn auch technisch beeindruckend (dabei war x-sept noch wesentlich besser als matthias hautsch). wenn wir wirklich leute von "draußen" erreichen wollen, dann müssen wir eine noch ganz andere musikalische sprache sprechen. wie gesagt, die verkündigung macht einiges wett, allerdings haben wir auch einen besucherrückgang verzeichnet, selbst von sta-jugendlichen. und was das interaktive angeht, sind wir auch etwas enttäuscht. ist der chat alles? die moderatoren anne-kathrin und markus sind okay, freddy hat noch potenzial, obwohl wir uns durchaus bewusst sind, wie schwer es ist, vor einer kamera zu sprechen.

44-2 Ich möchte euch mitteilen, dass mir die Musik am Freitag, sehr missfiel! Was sich nun wieder ein bisschen gebessert hat mit der Gruppe X-Sept! Das war schon eher das Richtige; nun habe ich die Hoffnung nicht aufgegeben, dass ihr uns im weiteren Verlauf bessere Musik bietet! Ich muss noch hinzufügen, dass aufgrund unserer extravaganten und super ausgefeilten Straßenaktionen, sogar "Satanistinnen" waren! Und diese dem Glauben nicht abgeneigt erscheinen, was doch schon eine beträchtliche Aktion wert war.

45-2 hab gehört, dass ihr unser Feedback benötigt- nun hier ist meins: Seid lockerer vor der Kamera- nicht so jetzt. Es sind ja nur junge Leute, die mal ein lockeres Programm sehen


1-3 wieder 8 neue - so kann es bleiben. ein schöner abend. besonders das café und die mixgetränke kommen an und schaffen gemütliche Plauderatmosphäre!!!

2-3 Irgendetwas macht ihr richtig: Unser Jungs (Teeniealter) haben nicht sonderlich viel mit Gemeinde am Hut. Im Gottesdienst sehen wir sie höchst selten. Aber bei L2L sitzen sie abend für abend in der ersten Reihe und hören von Anfang bis Ende zu!

3-3 Verkündigung war super, leider insgesamt etwas lang - könnte interaktiver sein (s. Werbung im Vorfeld)

4-3 Wir hatten Besuch von der landeskirchlichen Jugendgruppe und ihren Freunden - das Programm kam echt gut an - war ein richtig guter Abend, auch hinterher noch.

5-3 Wir hatten einen schönen abend, lockere Atmosphäre, Stephan sprach sehr ansprechend.

6-3 7 adultes et 7 jeunes non baptisés ve soir. Nous n'avons pas de visiteurs externes. Mais le but de notre participation au L2L est interne.

7-3 Sehr gute Botschaft!

8-3 Der Abend war echt cool und kam bei allen gut an.

9-3 Es wird echt immer besser! Ihr müsst nur bitte aufpassen, dass die Verkündigung (die echt sehr gut ist!) nicht zu weit nach hinten rutscht und zu lang wird. Für Adventis tolle Predigten, Gäste schweifen dann oft ab und fragen, ob Steffan Sigg noch lang redet ... Die Flyer, Plakate etc. sollten knapper und aussagekräftiger gehalten werden! Auch ist es schwierig einem älteren Jugendlichen eine Einladung in die Hand zu drücken, auf der drei kreischende Teenies sind ... schade, weil man sich damit Gäste "verschenkt". Aber alles in allem viel Arbeit, viel Mühe und ein dickes Lob.

10-3 Die Gruppe fand die Verkündigung als sehr gut, hatten jede Menge Stoff für gute Diskussionen.

11-3 War ein toller Abend. Unser Raum war sehr gut gefüllt.

12-3 Da hatte jemand etwas dagegen, dass unsere L2L-Abende weiterhin so harmonisch verlaufen! Gegen 19 Uhr mussten wir feststellen, dass unser Receiver kaputt war! Nicht dass an der Antenne oder an dem Empfangssignal irgend etwas nicht gestimmt hätte, nein der Receiver selbst hat erst gar keine Lebenszeichen von sich gegeben (Sicherung kaputt??!). So galt es kurzfristig umzudisponieren, so dass wir auf die Schnelle alle zu uns nach Hause genommen haben, um dort den Abend am Computer über Internet per Livestream zu sehen. Leider war die Übertragungsqualität trotz DSL nicht ganz so ideal (?!), dafür war unser Nachgespräch umso gewinnbringender.

13-3 Die Andacht kam sehr schlecht an, man kann den Leuten nicht einreden, dass ihr Leben "Scheiße" ist!

14-3 war gut und macht weiter so!!!

15-3 Hallo ihr Lieben, im Vergleich zu den ersten beiden Abenden eine enorme Steigerung - auch die Meinung unseres Publikums Musik hat die Jugend gelangweilt. Vortrag war o'key. Insgesamt sind sie mit dem Abendprogramm zufrieden gewesen.


17-3 Unser erfolgreichster Abend bisher!

18-3 In der Kürze liegt immer noch die Würze; darum also auch Heute kein langer Bericht. Der Event war SUPER! Unsere Besucher sind begeistert. Macht weiter so. Be COOL be
YOURSELF hat sich auch bei Stephan sichtbar durchgesetzt. (Bart weg) TOLL!!!

Kommentare von Teilnehmern: [Macht so Weiter! (Fett geschrieben); Jeder solte mal diesen Vortrag sehen; Die Musik ist halt immernoch euer Streitkind. Weniger Rock = weniger Lärm ;-) ] Dies haben Teilnehmer geschrieben, im Ganzen eine positive Resonanz

eine ganze Jugendgruppe der Baptisten wurde "gesichtet"

Die Ideen waren gut - wir hatten jedoch Mühe, den Zusammen"schluss" zu finden. Viele einzelne Dinge... Leider verliessen 2 "Fremde" den Saal beim Musikstück nach Stephens 1. Teil (hatten was anderes erwartet.) Macht weiter so!!!

kam bei uns nicht so gut an

Sehr gute Verkündigung, Rahmenprogramm kam etwas unprofessionell rüber... Unterm Strich guter Abend!

Abend ist gut angekommen. Für einige war er zu lange, vor allem das was vor dem Vortrag kam. Wir bekamen besuch der Jungen Kirche ..., die mit ihrer Jugend unseren L2L Abend besuchte

Eh, echt fett, konkret, ultrakrass, cool der Abend.

Keine Besonderheiten! Leider Technische Probleme durch eigenverschulden! Trotzdem Positives Feedback für den Abend in allen Bereichen!

Schöne Musik!!! Macht weiter so!

die coolen Bilder waren nicht cool!

Alles war ein bißchen zu oberflächlich.

War echt gut. Wir hatten 5 Leute, die noch nie in der Gemeinde waren, die zu uns gekommen sind. So langsam wird es was! Das Thema von Stephan war echt klasse. Einziges Problem, ihr habt wieder überzogen. Leider haben wir nur eine Stunde Sendezzeit beim Offenen Kanal.

genialer Abend ;) dieser Abend ist euch sehr gelungen. Praise the Lord!!


War ein wunderschöner Abend


Hatten leider keine fremden Gäste, sondern Verwandte von Geschwistern. Ist doch aber auch schon was. Wir sind ja froh, daß wir als kleine Gemeinde L2L überhaupt mitmachen können. Alles Gute und Gottes Segen


Wir waren echt sehr positiv überrascht über die vielen Gäste, die heute Abend da waren. Letztes mal waren es nur 5. Heute 18-wow! Grosses Dankeschön an Gott. Das Programm
war wieder gut und wir sind sehr zufrieden

38-3 Ich wollte einen großen Lob an die Band von heute aussprechen. Es hat mir persönlich sehr gefallen. Macht weiter so. Auch ich möchte mich mal so einbilden auslassen (positiv). Die Musik war "Rattenscharf" ein riesen Kompliment!!!! Auf jeden Fall weiter so und ich hoffe wir sehen euch noch einmal oder kommen nochmal in den Genuss eurer Musik.

39-3 Das war der beste Abend von allen bis jetzt und wir lassen uns morgenabend überraschen

40-3 war heute echt super ( echt cool) Musik war spitze, macht weiter so

41-3 Programm war heute wesentlich besser, Predigt sehr "cool", Musik klasse, Gäste, die noch nie bei uns waren!!! (Freunde)

42-3 Hey, nun stimmt die Musik!!! SUPER. Cool Beginning. See You.


44-3 Ich finde Link21life wirklich gut! Ein megafettes Lob an euch alle!! Ihr könnt das wirklich öfters machen/fcu


47-3 Wieder super abend gehabt (und immer noch... ;) ) bis auf einige Technische Probleme alles suuuuuuuuper :-)

48-3 Be-cool, noch cooler geht bei uns nicht!!!

49-3 Ihr werdet immer besser - weiter so!!! Predigt noch ein wenig zu lang, möglicherweise weiteres Break einfügen. Abschlussgebet kürzer. Alles Gute, viel Kraft und Gottes Beistand für Euch!!!

50-3 leider habe ich keine Zeit heute Abend in den Chat zu gehen, deshalb schreib ich euch

hi leute, die musik war heute total super, gibt es von der gruppe ne cd?


1-4 6 Besucher und ein gutes Thema!
2-4 Das ist einfach gut!
3-4 Fade war super!
4-4 Der Abend war echt super, ist auch für nicht mehr Jugendliche sehr schön mitzuerleben.
5-4 bisher der beste Abend
6-4 Wieder ein schöner abend, ansprechendes Thema gut rübergebracht, gutes essen in freundlicher Atmosphäre
7-4 9 adultes et 8 jeunes non baptisés sa soir. Nous n'avons pas de visiteurs externes. Mais le but de notre participation au L2L est interne.
8-4 So knackig waren die Jungs auch wieder nicht. Die Opern-Einlage war voll größig.
9-4 Der Abend war bisher der beste und kam bei allen gut an.
10-4 super Stimmung
11-4 Geniale Musik! tolle Verkündigung!
12-4 Musik wäre besser mit Djembe als mit Schlagzeug gewesen, Botschaft ging in Musik etwas verloren
13-4 Schönes Konzert und es war schöner und professioneller als beim ersten Wochenende. Großes Lob an euch alle!
14-4 Super Abend, viele gute Gespräche, viele Gäste, obwohl es den ganzen Tag geregnet hat + wir keine richtige Einladungsaktion machen konnten.
15-4 der musikalischer Beitrag war einfach super!!!
16-4 Nach meiner Kritik (schien euch ja ähnlich gegangen zu sein) zu den letzten Abenden, möchte ich euch jetzt ein Kompliment machen. Dies war ein absoluter Spitzenabend. Die Musik war jugendgemäß, die Verkündigung wie immer sehr gut, interaktive Geschichten (Video, PC-Ecke, Interview) sehr passend, die Kammerführung wesentlich besser und die Moderatoren auch. Freddy überzeugt beim Letzteren am meisten - echt Klasse. Die Verkündigung mit zusätzlichen Elementen (Film, Tafelbild) ist super. Ich denke auch den Gästen an den verschiedenen Orten wird es gefallen haben. Ich fand es toll, wünsche euch Gottes Segen für die Vorbereitung der beiden letzten Abende und macht weiter so!!!!!!!!
17-4 Die Musik hat der Jugend super gefallen. Life ist besser. Der Vortrag war o'key, aber zu lang. Insgesamt hat es ihnen sehr gut gefallen.
18-4 Hallo liebes link2life Team ich fand eure 4 Übertragung einfach supi Die Band war Hammer niedlich und auch so war alles Hammer gut ich wollte fragen ob ihr von der Band eine E-Mail oder Homepage Adresse habt wen ja wäre Hammer supi wen ihr mir die schickt meine E-Mail (Naddel-power@web.de) danke euch mit freundlichen Grüßen
20-4 die Moderatoren werden immer lockerer vor der Kamera! echt super!

22-4 Wir danken unserem grossartigem Gott für seine Führung. Unsere Dekoration entsprach voll und ganz dem Thema. Wir sahen eine Steigerung vom ersten bis zum vierten Abend und wissen nicht ob es überhaupt noch besser werden kann! Ihr seit echt STARK... weiter so!!


24-4 gute Resonanz, L2L. (Zusammenarbeit, gemeinsame Mission) hat bei uns positiv auf die Gruppe ausgewirkt, dass wir nen recht guten Zusammenhalt in der Gruppe haben...

25-4 Musik = super!!!! Der Abend war sehr kompakt. Stephan brachte viel "Stoff". Freddy ist ein super L2L-"Star", sein CH-Deutsch kam bei uns super an, der ganze Saal schallte vor Lachen :-) (ZUGABE!)

26-4 gegenüber den gestrigen abend war das super

27-4 wir haben den chat über dieleinwand gezeigt, was nicht sehr förderlich für gespräche war, die bar lief sehr gut und wir konnten anschliessen zusammen essen gehen. ein gast kam mit.

28-4 Sehr gute Verkündigung, Rahmenprogramm war besser als am 3. Abend. Gute Musikgruppe! (Leider kein Interview mit Musikern, das hätte sicherlich mehr gebracht als bei anderen Gruppen...)

29-4 War genial und hat alle angesprochen. Die Stimmung war noch den ganzen Abend recht schön.

30-4 Unser kleiner Jugendraum war brechend voll und wir hatte jede Menge Spaß zusammen. Das Thema des Abends war super gestaltet; die Message, die Moderation, die Musik - alles steigert sich qualitativ sehr.


32-4 Bislang der beste Abend!!! Musik super, Message sehr realitätsnah und emotional - klasse!!!

33-4 Danke Stephan für die Geometrie der Liebe.

34-4 Da wir nur eine kleine Gemeinde mit 25 Gemeindegliedern sind, die fast keine Jugendliche hat, nehmen somit mehrere "ältere Teilnehmer" an den Veranstaltungen teil.

35-4 die Musik war echt spitze... Gottes Segen für die weiteren Planungen...

36-4 Echt gut angekommen. Es ergeben sich die ersten Kontakte zu unserer Jugend und der Band der Sonshine-Family

37-4 Herzlichen Dank für Musik, Moderation, Part von Stephan, ... Der Abend kam bei uns wieder sehr gut an!

38-4 Das Thema war sehr gut auf die Bedürfnisse der Jugendlichen zugeschnitten. Ansonsten war alles wieder sehr gut.

39-4 Heute war der beste Abend, sowohl was Euer Programm, die Musik und unser Programm vor Ort und den Besuch angeht. Prais the Lord,

40-4 war super heute

41-4 hallo, ich wollte fragen ob link2life nächstes jahr im januar wieder ist? denn ich finde das richtig gut wie ihr das macht.und finde ihr solltet weiter machen. ciao vivi

42-4 Ich wünsche Euch gutes Gelingen und vor allem Gottes Segen! Ihr macht das bestimmt wieder ganz toll!! - weil Ihr seid SPITZE!!!

43-4 wir wollen finden eure Vorträge voll cool. Wenn wir ehrlich sind, gefallen sie uns besser als die Net-Vorträge. Sie sind jugendgerecht gemacht und selbst unsere jüngsten Besucher waren total begeistert. Einen Tipp noch: Lasst doch die Grüße solange durchlaufen, bis Stephan anfängt mit predigen.

Hey ich fand FADE echt voll krass... kann man bei euch eine CD von ihnen bestellen???
Endlich habt ihr mal Wind in die Sache "Musik" bekommen...


Die beiden Bands haben mich aufgrund verschiedener Faktoren überzeugt. Da sei mal die Qualität der Sängerstimmen erwähnt, ihre unübersehbare Routine, ihr natürliches Auftreten. Auch die Inhalte stimmen. Mit dem unterstützenden Hintergrund und Nebel erzeugt das eine professionell gute Stimmung.


Impulse in die Gemeinden ausgehen würden, unsere Gottesdienste insgesamt moderner zu gestalten, um die Menschen der heutigen Zeit ansprechen zu können.

53-4

54-4
ich habe euren Vortrag am Freitag in der Gemeinde Tuttlingen angeschaut und muß sagen die jugend und ihr habt das voll gut gemacht ich wünsche mir das nach link2live es troztem weitergeht mit der seite ihr seid alle spitze.


1-5 Klasse Ansprache! Wir waren hellauf begeistert von der Ansprache von Stephan Sigg: sehr gelungene Aktualisierung des biblischen Berichts über David!!!
2-5 ansprechendes Thema
3-5 Musik war voll daneben, selbst Gäste fanden die Musik überhaupt nicht passend!!!
4-5 war ok.
5-5 musik passte nicht ganz zum Rahmen
6-5 Ihr werdet immer besser. Danke für die wahnsinnigen Energien, die alle aufbringen, damit L2L ein Erfolg wird.
7-5 Der Abend mit den wenigsten Besuchern, aber trotzdem total gelungen!
8-5 War ein guter Abend. Noch besser als die Abende davor!
9-5 alles prima
10-5 der 5. Abend war nach unserem Empfinden der Beste, auch das Thema spannend und dicht am Hörer.
11-5 Wird immer besser die Moderation. Schade dass es bald vorbei ist. Musikgruppe war nicht so toll. Haben sich zur Schau gestellt.
12-5 Es war der "Beste!" Abend. Der Vortrag von Stephan hat uns an diesem Abend am Besten gefallen.
13-5 Musik war nicht passend um auf das Thema einzustimmen. viel zu hart.
14-5 Der Abend kam super an. (die Musik diesmal auch)
15-5 Wie immer einfach spitze!!!!
16-5 Echt gut!!!
17-5 Very good
18-5 die musik war heute das letzte, unsere Gäste waren "erstaunt" was wir bei einer christlichen Veranstaltung so veranstalten
19-5 Vortrag und Moderation war SUPER!
20-5 viele waren befremdet durch die musik. die stimmung war aber gut.
21-5 Sehr guter Abend! Die hohen Erwartungen nach dem 2. Wochenende wurden auf jeden Fall erfüllt. Respekt vor dem Mut, Normal Generation einzuladen! Weiter so!
22-5 Sehr gelungener Abend mit zwei Gästen, die wir noch nie vorher gesehen hatten. Es hat ihnen sehr gut gefallen. vortrag war absolut gut - normal generations? hat uns nicht umgehalten
23-5 Das Vorprogramm hat leider den wenigsten gefallen. Aber die Lieder während dem Hauptprogramm fanden alle gut, nur die Performance war etwas fehl am Platz, meinen die meisten.
25-5 schöne stimmung
26-5 Schöne und friedvolle Atmosphäre bei uns, ansprechender Stephan Sigg
Freiheit, wie sie genossen werden kann. Schade, dass das Vorprogramm von "Normal Generation!" so früh zu Ende war!!! Da hätte noch ein Beitrag reingepasst.

Musik kam bei der Zielgruppe sehr gut an. Stephan hat die Botschaft mal wieder gelungen übergebracht.

Musik war gut

Der Abend war super gut!!! Stephan's Ausführungen zwar amüsant, aber treffend.

Normal Generation? rocks!

Super Message von Stefan. Hat vielen von uns bis jetzt am besten gefallen!

Musik war wie bei Wettens dass...

Das Vorprogramm findet bei unseren "älteren" Gästen (17-21) nicht so recht ankläng. -> 2 Leute sind erst gegen halb 9 gekommen (kurz bevor Steffan Sigg angefangen hat zu sprechen) - ich glaube ihnen hat es ganz gut gefallen. Der Videoclip vom Extremsport war spitze! Weiter so! Die Aktion mit den Grüßen etc finde ich nicht so gut, da nur die Leute Bezug dazu haben die gegrüßt werden/gegrüßt haben... Steffan war wieder spitze! Gottes Guter Geist spricht aus ihm! Weiter so!

Kam wieder super gut an. Schade das so wenig Leute da waren...


Der Abend war schon wieder recht gut.

Es war ein schöner Abend. Gute Abwechslung mit Aktionen. Input darf nicht länger sein. Einen besonderen Nikolausgruß an Freddy!

Es hat allen gut gefallen!

Tolles Programm bei Euch, aber ohne erkennbaren Grund fehlen bei uns heute die Gäste.

he ich dachte ich meld mich auch mal zu wort! also ich fand die vrekündigung echt klassen von stefan! hat mir echt gut gefallen! auch die moteratoren haben sich echt mühe gegeben! das war echt schön! aber die musik die konnte man eigentlich vergessen! super unpassend zu dem ganzen programm! vor allem die vom 6.12. (NG) ich dachte ich machen ein billigen abklatsch von den backstreetboys! oder so! vor allem war es mir sehr unangenehm wenn sogar meine freundin mir sagen muB (die nich in der gemeinde is) dass die musik nich der hit is! ich finde ich dass die musik zu dem rahmen des 12l progamm passend war! sie hat die ganze verkündigung eher untergraben!


Die Veranstaltung war echt super. Die Musik auch weiter so.

Echt gut!

Der "no limit" Vortrag fand ich gut. Die Musik war... ...naja... ich steh mehr auf härtere Töne.(aber war ganz O.K.)

der abend war sehr gelungen. ich hab mir das ganzes von zuhause angesehen mit meiner ganze familie.die musik war toll und was mir besonders gefallen hat war die Symboliesierung der Grenzen.

Wir waren gestern total enttäuscht über die Musikgruppe "Normal Generation". Als wir um 19:45 ins Vorprogramm eingeschaltet haben, waren unsere Besucher nicht erfreut über diese Musikgruppe und ein raunen ging durch die Reihe. Wir entschieden uns deshalb, uns aus dem Vorprogramm auszuklinken und sangen Lieder aus unserem Jugendingsbuch, was allen zusagte und auch freudig mitsangen, sofern sie das Lied kannten. Zwei nichtadventistische Gäste war total schockiert und verliessen auf schnellstem Weg den Veranstaltungsraum, denn so eine Show erwarteten sie nicht bei uns und empfanden es total unpassend. Schade eigentlich. Wir hoffen, dass heute Abend die Musik besser sein wird und hoffen, falls es wieder einmal ein Link2Life geben sollte, wir bessere Musikgruppen haben werden. Unser
Kritikpunkt: Falls es schon eine Show gibt, soll wenn schon dennschon gut choreografisch vorbereitet sein und nicht einfach im "ich könnte mal wieder einen Salto machen"-Stil sein. Die gestrige Musikgruppe war schlicht und einfach peinlich und überhaupt nicht musikalisch (ohne Begleitung sind sie schon nach drei Tönen total von der Tonlage abgewichen!!), ausserdem verstand man überhaupt kein Wort, wovon die Lieder handelten. Bitte hört euch die Gruppen zum vornherein gut an und überlegt euch, ob die Gruppen "echt" sind, d.h. sieht man, dass das, wovon sie singen, wirklich leben und auch ob sie mit ihrer Musik Gott loben und preisen wollen, oder ob sie sich selbst in den Mittelpunkt stellen wollen, oder ob sie die christliche Musik als Sprungbrett für ihre Musikkarriere missbrauchen.


Na ihr am Anfang hatte ich mich ja ziemlich über die Musik beschwert und manch andere kleineigkeiten 1. Abend aber heute wieder absolut ihr habt dann wenigstens doch noch den richtigen Treh rausbekommen echt schade das nun schon alles vorbei sein wird ich bin noch nie so gern zu einer Evangelisation gegangen und die Musik war spitze heute so eine Band hätte am 1. abend viel ärger erspart. Macht doch einfach noch ein paar Monate so weiter währe schön (-:

In unserer Gemeinde verlassen die Gäste den Raum,- die Musik ist so was von schlecht ( hey cool jetzt hats ein Standbild...)! Die Texte sind eingemassen o.k. aber das ganze Theater müsste bestraft werden,- dann lädt doch bitte richtig Musiker ein wie Xavier Naidoo oder so wenn ein Popkonzert so gefällt! Die wissen wenigstens was sie machen. Bitte bitte bitte bringt Morgen was besseres, es kann beinahe nicht schlechter werde...

Hallo liebes L2L Musik-Team! Ich wollte nur mal loswerden, dass ich die Musik bis jetzt jedes Mal supergenial fand! Es war viel Abwechslung drin, also für jeden was dabei und was mir persönlich gefallen hat, die Musiker waren nicht einfach irgendwelche Leien, sondern Professionelle, die mit ihrer persönlichen Musik Gott gelobt haben. Also dicker Lob an den Organisator!
Nach der heutigen Satellitenübertragung haben wir, die Jugendgruppe Kirchheim, einstimmig beschlossen: EURE ÜBERTRAGUNG WAR EINFACH PERFEKT!!!!!!!!! Erst einmal war „Normal Generation“, der Musikstil, die Texte und wie sie das Ganze rübergebracht haben, total super! Bis jetzt absolut die beste Band! Das Thema gefiel uns sehr gut und Stefan Sigg hat uns mit seinen Worten echt etwas für unser Leben mitgegeben. (Wir könnten ihm stundenlang zuhören!) Macht weiter so!!

1-6 Das 6. Thema fiel deutlich ab, man hatte den Eindruck, dass Stefan nicht so beim Hörer und seinen Träumen war.
3-6 tolle Veranstaltung, guter Besuch
4-6 Musik besser als am vorabend!
5-6 Schade, ist es nun vorbei. Genialer Abschluss!
6-6 War sehr gut
7-6 war echt gut!
8-6 ein toller Abschluß !!! DANKE !!!
9-6 Der durchgängig gute Besuch der Veranstaltungen zeigt mir, dass sich eure Bemühungen gelohnt haben. Ich bin stolz auf meine Gemeinde (und auf euch!), dass sie sich bewusst auf die Lebenswelt der Jugendlichen eingelassen hat um ihnen Gottes Wort nahe zu bringen.
10-6 Super Abend mit vielen Gästen - das große Finale, freuen uns auf JugendNet 2004!
12-6 wir freuen uns schon auf L2L 2004!!
13-6 Super Schluß. Toll, dass so etwas 2004 wieder gemacht wird. Wir freuen uns darauf!
15-6 Stephan hat seine Sache sehr gut gemacht. \"Der hat echt was drauf!\" war eine Rückmeldung.
16-6 Die Abende sind immer besser geworden, schade das es jetzt zu Ende ist.
17-6 Wie immer einfach super!!!!
18-6 schade, dass es jetzt vorbei ist...
19-6 stephan sigg war(wie immer) gut - hat auch einen guten abschluß der serie gemacht - prima! eine Frage konnte ich unseren gästen aber leider nicht beantworten: \"warum habt ihr beim beten musik - mich würde das vom gespräch mit gott ablenken.\" die Frage steht - versucht sie doch bitte für euch (und für das nachtemal) zu beantworten
21-6 super abend - super stimmung - super musik - super botschaft
22-6 Geflugener Abschluß! Schade, dass es vorbei ist, wir freuen uns auf 2004!
23-6 Heute das erste mal auch Ältere aus der Gemeinde. Zum Gucken, bevor's vorbei ist...

455
24-6 musik war gut - statements von sarah brendel kamen gut an - vortrag kam bei uns mit sehr vielen störungen und ausfällen an - hat die stimmung stark runtergezogen

25-6 Es war ein gelungener Abschlussabend. Die Stimmung war einfach nur genial. Es war aber keineswegs so, dass wir jetzt alle traurig sind, dass es vorbei ist, sondern sind alle fröhlich, da es ja ein Anfang ist.


27-6 War fetzig! Freu mich schon auf 2004 - das nächste Link2Life! Besonders die Musik hat mir supi gefallen!

28-6 Alles geht mal zu Ende. Wir sind sehr froh, dabei gewesen zu sein. Trotz weniger Gäste war es eine gute Sache für unsere Gemeinde.


30-6 ein gelungener Abschluß! Danke!!!

31-6 schade!!!! es ist vorbei!!!

32-6 Die Moderatoren waren heute ganz klar am Besten!

33-6 Grobes Lob an Sarah Brendel, sie war wohl die beste Interpretin aus 6.

34-6 Es war eine schöne Zeit. Es hat Spaß gemacht auch wenn 'ne Menge Arbeit dran hing. Dir Stefan weiterhin Gottes Segen für deine Arbeit.

35-6 Gute Stimmung, und hinterher gibt’s Live-Rap von Daniel Franz aus Hannover (kleiner Tip für die nächste Übertragung)

interessant! Ich weiß nicht, wem von Euch es auch so geht, aber dieser Chat ist genau die richtige Mischung zwischen realen und virtuellen Bekanntschaften. Da wir als Baden-Württemberger und speziell als Lahrer hier ziemlich gut und regelmäßig vertreten sind, trifft man fast immer jemanden, den man persönlich kennt. Daraus entwickeln sich Gespräche, die dann auch andere mit einbeziehen und so erweitert sich der Freundeskreis mit jeder Session ein wenig.
So bleibt froschgrün im grauen Alltag doch weiterhin präsent. Und das, wie ich hoffe, noch für lange Zeit. FROSCHGRÜN FOREVER!!;-)

Auch wenn L2L jetzt vorerst vorbei ist wollte ich sagen, daß mich die gesamte Übertragungsreihe sehr positiv überzeugt hat! Besonders die Moderatoren fand ich, obwohl sie ja vorher mit Fernsehen keine Erfahrung hatten, echt gut! Man hatte besonders am zweiten und dritten WoE richtig das Gefühl sie haben Spaß bei der Sache! Und das überzeugt auch den Zuschauer, weil es ehrlich und offen wirkt! Sie haben ihre Sache wirklich gut gemacht!! Und jetzt noch ein Lob an die Programmgestalter, wir haben L2L in einer Altenheimgemeinde geschaut, und selbst von den älteren Geschwistern kamen sehr viel positive Rückmeldungen! Sie sagten häufig, die Musik ist nicht ganz unsere Welt gewesen, aber die Botschaft ist das entscheidende und die hat auch uns angesprochen! Und auch unsere nichtadventistischen Gäste waren vom Gesamtkonzept überzeugt! Von Leuten die noch nie bei uns gewesen sind, und teilweise durch Straßenaktionen angesprochen wurden, haben wir sehr beeindruckendes Feedback bekommen! Ich denke Euer Programm war von Gott reich gesegnet!!


Dank euch allen!!!!!

41-6 Ihr seit echt klasse! die Vorträge von Stephan Sigg sind echt klasse. Er erzählt wirklich frei und so, dass es jeder verstehen kann und dass es jedem in die seele geht! ihr müsst weiter so machen. BYE BYE ! wirklich frei

Feedback L2L 2004 / First Weekend

1-W1 Link zu den Moderationskarten funktioniert nicht. pdf korrupt...

2-W1 danke fürs hochladen des streams, aber die qualität ??? ca. 14mb im gegensatz dazu waren es 2002 ca. 140mb. also 70 min auf 14 mb kann man kaum anschauen ! vielleicht könnt ihs wenigstens verdreifachen ? danke für eine rückmeldung

3-W1 Ich war insgesamt enttäuscht von gestern!

4-W1 Die Messages sind cool, aber die Musik sollte jugendlicher ausfallen! Ansonsten: Weiter so!

5-W1 Hallo Leute von link2life. Ich finde die Themen bis jetzt total gut. wir konnten bis jetzt alles gut mit mitverfolgen. Vielen gefällt es nicht wie manche von euch mit den Händen fuchteln wenn sie grad anfängen etwas zu sagen. Gruß an alle

6-W1 Könt ihr die Größe auch ins Internet stellen?

7-W1 Auf der Homepage-Umfrage wird nach unserer Lieblingsmusik gefragt: Ist in der STA Anbetungsmusik so "verpönt", dass diese in einem christlichen Rahmen nicht in der Auswahl ist? Oder läuft die - leider! - unter Rock? Ich liebe die Anbetungsmusik am meisten... - leider wird sie in der STA oft "verteufelt", obwohl ihr Inhalt christlich und das Herz der Singenden Gott zugewandt, offen ist...


10-W1 Heute war Gaby - die Mutter von Rebeca und Elena - wirklich fleißig, sie hat in der Gemeinde viele Leute angesprochen, die unbedingt mal zu uns kommen und L2L angucken sollen. Ganz begeistert hat sie uns heute auch noch ihre jüngste Tochter mitgeschickt, außerdem war heute auch noch Anastasiya (eine Jugendliche aus der Gemeinde, die sonst nicht zu unserer Gruppe kommt) dabei. Heute haben wir L2L über den Mediaplayer angesehen. Alle haben sich über das scharfe Bild, dass püktlich zum Beginn des Vorspanns eingestellt war, gefreut (wie man auf einem der Fotos sieht! : -) ) Der Inhalt war klasse! Wir haben uns vorgenommen, die zwei Wochen bis zur nächsten Übertragung zu nutzen um unsere Freunde noch mal anzusprechen. Wir wollen beim nächsten mal auch Rolands Zimmer mit Gästen füllen!!! Mal sehen ... Jetzt wird schon seit einiger Zeit Cluedo gespielt und ge chattet. Es wird sicher spät... Alles Liebe! Bis zum nächsten Abend!

11-W1 Hi - Die Musik ist sehr gut! Kompliment an WOLFI! Der Sound kommt geil raus über Uplink!


13-W1 Hey! Beide Daumen hoch für den Vortragenden!!! Konstruktive Kritik möchte ich üben am Vorbereitungsteil auf Stefan – der ist einfach zu lange, die Interviews und Anspiele waren kürzer eindrucksvoller und auch aussagekräftiger. Schade dass ihr die Photos die ihr im Netz ansurf nicht wirklich groß zeigt – die ganze Jugend wartet doch noch auf Fotos von anderen und hoffentlich der eigenen Veranstaltung – wie der Link2Life drink von München. Da gibt’s zwei teilnehmende Gemeinden und die Münchner-Pasinger hätten sich wirklich gefreut das Photo auch auf der Leinwand zu sehen! Weiterhin alles Gute bei den Vorbereitungen und Überlegungen!

14-W1 Alle feedback der ersten beiden abende aus rostock: Ich fands rundum ganz gut. / Fabi Ich fands alles spitze und Tobi soll locker nehmen. Eine feste Band find ich auch richtig gut! Benni / Ich fand die Musik überhaupt nicht gut. Klar die anspruchsvoll und ihr beherrscht eure Instrumente, aber mir und vielen meiner Freude steht der Sinn nach Abwechslung und wenigstens ab und zu nach einem rockigen Sound. Basti / Meiner Meinung nach war’s ein gelungener Abend. Die Band war in Ordnung, die Moderatoren ganz menschlich (im positiven Sinn); und der Sprecher samt Nachricht TOP! Einziges Manko: das Interview war etwas lang und „unkoordiniert“. Aber das nur nebenbei. Also für den ersten Abend wirklich richtig gut !!! / Ich finde man könnte das Saxophon ab und zu weglassen, denn es klingt zu sehr nach Casino Mucke!!!!!N.H / ich finde die Barmädchen am BESTEN!!! / das L2L Quiz finde ich am besten / ich mag die schnulzige mucke nicht! / Ich stimme Clemi voll zu. / ich finde persönlich die Diskussionsrunde zu lang mit den Gästen

15-W1 Gottes Segen fürs Link2Life - Verfolge es erstmals per Internet mit und bin sehr begeistert :)- LG aus Wien

16-W1 hey leuts..... waren beim ersten mal nicht dabei! schade, aber auf samstag... das Thema war sehr interessant, aber die MUSIK war absolut schlecht, und dieses sinnlose interview... und die soap kam voll gestellt rüber, es ist zwar schwer spontan zu spielen, aber versucht es mal.. kommt besser rüber als die texte die ihr da auswendig lernt! Den akzent von Stephan ist voll süß! mag den! ja... ansonsten ist es echt genial! Wünsch euch noch gottes segen und motivation.... lasst euch nicht untergrien!


18-W1 Der Abend war super cool und das Thema total spannend!!weiter so und es wird auch dieses Jahr ein voller erfolg!

19-W1 Der Abend war echt Super!! Ich fand es sehr gut wie Stefan das Thema auf seine lockere und überzeugende Art übermittelt hat. Auch die Soup und das Interview waren Klasse! Weiter so:

20-W1 ein fettes lob & DANKE an stephan und die 3 moderatoren!

21-W1 Herzliches Hallo aus Wien! Leider wird Link2Life bei uns nicht offiziell ausgestrahlt, aber
zum Glück gibt es ja das Internet! So konnte ich heute Abend Euer Programm trotzdem mitverfolgen. Zu meiner Überraschung funktioniert es sogar ganz gut :-) Werde es weiter sagen und hoffe, dass sich noch viele zum Link2Life "hineinklicken"! Wünsche Euch allen, die als Mitwirkende oder Zuseher dabei sind Gottes Segen!

22-W1 Stephan Sigg ist einfach spitzenklasse!!!! man kann ihm super zuhören und er spricht die Jugend mit seinen Predigten an und begeistert sie!!!!danke an das team von L2L das sie uns so ne show ermöglichen!!!! grüß aus hagen


25-W1 Hallo Link2Life Team! Ich werde eine kurze Zusammenfassung (ausgehend von den Feedbackkarten) zu den ersten beiden Abenden euch geben: Insgesamt sei es deutlich zu spüren und zu erkennen, dass ihr schon Erfahrungen habt :) Der Aufbau der Abende sei klar, die kurzen Musikstücke zwischen den einzelnen Teilen des Abends seien gut und geben jedem einen kurzen Raum über die vorhergehenden Dinge nachzudenken, sowie sich auf das Kommende/Neue einzustellen. Der Internet Infoteil wurde im Vergleich zum letzten L2L auf ein gutes Mass reduziert. Die Musiker bringen zum Thema passende Lieder (roter Faden ist hier zu erkennen), jedoch könnten die Sänger, obwohl ihre Singtechnik gut sei, noch etwas an entspanntheit gewinnen (und die Lieder bitte auswändig) Der Talkblock wird als zu lange und zu oberflächlich empfunden, jedoch führe er gut in die Thematik ein (roter Faden :-) Zur Message selber kommen nur positive Feedback, die ich Stephan gleich selber schreiben werde. Mein persönliches Nachwort: Danke für eure Arbeit!!!


27-W1 Liebes Link2Life-team, ich finde ihr macht das alles sehr professionell! Das Bühnenbild ist sehr gut und vermittelt eine gemütliche Atmosphäre und bei der Band merkt man, dass es Profis sind. Ich weiß die Sänger haben schon einiges an Kritik gehört und muss selbst auch sagen, dass sie hinter der Band etwas in den Schatten treten, aber da ich weiß, wie schwierig es ist da vormal zu stehen und es allen recht zu machen, finde ich es toll und bewundere sie sehr! (könnt ihr ja mal weitergeben). Ich finde die Moderatoren sind auch sehr gut gewählt und so ein bisschen Aufregung am ersten Abend gehört nun einmal dazu. Ich war dieses Jahr bei "Jesus House" und muß sagen, dass wir ihnen in nichts nachstehen und es mir leicht
fallen würde auch außerkirchliche Freunde mit zu den Abenden zu bringen. Die Themen sind sehr ansprechend und Stefan Sigg ist mit seiner frischen lockeren Art, genau der Richtige. Letzten Abend durch Kritik nicht entmutigen! Man wird es nie allen recht machen können und schließlich machen wir es ja um Menschen näher zu Gott zu bringen und nicht um eine perfekte Show zu liefern! Viel Kraft Euch noch und ich freu mich auf die nächsten Abende.


30-W1 Das Message war echt toll. Aber ich finde die Musik nicht so passend.


33-W1 wollte grade den stream von heute ansehen, der link geht aber auf den gestrigen, checkt das mal bitte, also bei beiden links fr und sa wird die gestrige sendung angezeigt, schade. wegen der qualität hat sich auch noch keiner gemeldet, auch schade, der 2004 stream ergab gestern ca 19 mb im gegensatz zu 2002 waren oder ergeben sich ca. 140 mb ?? viele grüße, carsten

34-W1 Hallo, die Übertragung ist bei uns sehr gut angekommen (vor allem der zweite Abend). Was ich ungünstig finde ist die Präsentation der Internetseiten, wo man als Zuschauer nicht wirklich sieht was auf dieser Seite ist. Das ist auch schon alles. Macht weiter so, Christina

35-W1 - wann interaktive Spiele - Interview nicht so langziehen oder spannender gestalten - wenn Stephan S. spricht, sehen die Leute im Cafe in Darmstadt gelangweilt aus und traurig - Tobi mehr lächeln, auch wenn die Camera ihn nicht direkt zeigt - Soap ist super - Musik geht so - Camera bitte öfter mal das Publikum zeigen

36-W1 ich verfolge L2L sehr gerne. vor allem weil stephan sigg die themen ganz gut rüberbringen kann. ich finde dass tanja ein bisschen unnatürlich wirkt. alles aufgesetzt. sonst ist alles sehr schön, grüße, alena

37-W1 Hallo! Meine Glückwünsche zur Auftaktsendung! Zwei kleine Probleme hatte ich, die ich euch mitteilen a) Die eingebundene Schrift mit den Namen der Personen ist sehr schlecht

38-W1
Hallo! Meine Glückwünsche auch zu diesem Abend. Einfach erfrischend die Verkündigung von Stephan. Und dann möchte ich mich natürlich auch für die toll lesbare Schrift bei den Nameneinblendungen bedanken, indem die jetzt schwarz umrandet ist. Ich hätte nicht gedacht, daß meine Anregung vom Freitag so schnell umgesetzt wird. Alle Achtung! Super. Also dann weiter so!

39-W1
Hi! ich hab mal hier so zusammengefasst, was mir bei L2L als Feedback zu Ohren gekommen ist. Ist nicht repräsentativ und viell. hat der eine oder andere auch das schon gemäunt.- weiter verbessertes Gesamtkonzept - Soap ausschließlich positiv...- Unterhaltsungs-Überleitungsmusik: gut! - Vokalmusik: nicht so ganz auf der Höhe der Zeit (Jüngere), aber ok..., Texte schwer bis gar nicht verständlich (im Saal). - Interviews: etwas zu langatmig, ehe sie auf den Punkt kommen, es fehlen hier und da ein wenig die "interessanten, spannenden" Fragen, Jasmin soll dem Befragten nicht ins Wort fallen, sondern eine Mini-Atempause abpassen, bis sie interveniert... manche hatten den Eindruck, dass die Interviews so gut wie gar nicht vorbereitet waren - Verkündigung: inhaltlich sehr gut, Stil auch gut! stellenweise etwas "gehetzter" Eindruck (Zeitprobleme?)

40-W1
Liebs Link2Life Team. Nach dem ersten Wochenende möchte ich ein kurzes Feedback zu den Abenden geben und was mir so bei Gesprächen mit anderen aufgefallen ist.
MODERATION: Die Moderatoren machen ihre Sache gut und kommen auch gut an. Zwar wirkt Tobi noch ein wenig angespannt, aber das wird schon kommen. Ein kleines Lachen im Gesicht wirkt Wunder :-) MUSIK: Dass ihr jetzt eine eigene Link2Life Band habt, ist eine gute Sache. Der Stil der Lieder ist angenehm und hab bis jetzt keine negative Reaktion gehört. Vor allem das gestrige Lied, wo es darum ging, wenn wir alle schlechten Bäume entfernen haben wir keine Wald mehr, schlecht singende Vögel, keine Vögel mehr, etc. fand ich super. INTERVIEW: Hier gab es sehr viel Kritik bei uns in Zürich. Meist war der Kritikpunkt, dass das Interview zu lange ginge, ob man es nicht verkürzen könnte. Jemand meinte, wenn er dies am TV sehen würde, hätte er schon längst weggezappt (nicht weil die Personen nicht interessant waren, aber er meinte, nach 5-10 Min hat es gesehen). SKETCHs: Die Sketche wurden sehr positiv aufgenommen und vor allem die jüngeren sind gespannt wie die "Soap" weitergeht! Weiter so! DIE BAR IM HINTERGRUND & COKTAILS: Wir vermissten die Bemerkung, dass ihr Rezepte für ALKOHOLFREIE Cocktails sammelt, oder ist dies nicht dazu beschränkt. Ausserdem fragen wir uns, wieso man eine große Bar im Hintergrund hat (und man sieht Flaschen alkoholischer Getränke (oder auch nur der Meinung es seien alkoholische Getränke)) und dabei wird eigentlich gesagt, dass sich besaufen nicht das Richtige wäre. STEPHAN SIGG / KAMERAFÜHRUNG: Wir wissen, dass Stephan eine starke Gestikulation hat, was uns eigentlich auch nicht stört. Wenn man aber mit der Kamera zu stark auf den Stephan zoomt, springt er dann von der einen Bildseite auf der anderen immer hin und her (und die Kamera mit entsprechender Verzögerung). Dies ist sehr unruhig. Kann man dies verbessern (einfach nicht so stark zoomen)? Dann noch einfach eine Bemerkung an Stephan: Ein Besucher fand dass er noch zu angespannt/im Redefluss war und eine gewisse Ruhe im Gebet fehlte. Aber sonst: Weiter so!!! Wir sind ganz gespannt auf die nächsten 6 Abende und freuen uns wieder dabei zu sein.

41-W1
Hallo?! Schade, ihr habt euch so eine Mühe gegeben, aber ich bin schon nach 23 Minuten? entzückt raus und nachhause gegangen, weil ich keine Rockkonzerte besuche. Dann: Ich wohne hier in Köln, da ist es nichts besonderes, wenn man beim Aldi einkaufen oder beim Joggen im Park den Dreharbeiten zu irgendeiner Soap in die quere kommt. Ihr habt das echt professionell gemacht! Dies könnt ihr sicher an eine Filmproduktionsfirma verkaufen. Also, ich kenne schon länger Link2Life, aber hatte noch nie das Gefühl, das ihr die Sache mit Jesus
Hallo Stephan, Ich hoffe dir geht es gut. Ich möchte dir einfach mal sagen, dass du ein guter Redner bist, bei dem es Spass macht zuzuhören. Du erzählst was wichtig ist und das auf eine lockere Art. Mach weiter so!!!!


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**Feedback L2L 2004 / Second Weekend**

1-W2
leider kann ich heute nicht L2L in der Gemeinde verfolgen, da mich die Grippe niedergemacht hat. Aber zum Glück geht jetzt der live-stream und somit kann ich verfolgen, was ihr so treibt. freue mich aber schon auf nächste Woche, wenn ich euch besuchen werde in Darmstadt. gottes segen euch und viel Kraft

2-W2
Stephan ist der hammer!!! er spricht jedem von uns aus tiefstem herzen!!! so gepackt war ich selten!!!!

3-W2
Also, die Band ist verbessenswertig. Die Soap, Da finden wir die Handlung, den Themen sehr gut angepasst. Aber es klingt sehr auswendig gelernt!!! Die Moderation ist sehr viel besser als an den vorigen Abenden. Da Wars!!! Bis Morgen!!!!!!!!! Eure Sara, Anne, Theo und Mirjam

4-W2
Hi. Bei uns in Ansbach waren viele Gäste da!! Heute kommen noch mehr. Nächstes mal schicken wir euch auch Bilder mit. Ihr macht des SUPER!!!! Bye AJ Ansbach

5-W2
Ich finde, ihr habt ein wenig das Zielalter verpasst und die Musik könnte ein bisschen (viel mehr) "Würze" haben, so ein bisschen weniger ruhig! Immerhin preisen wir Gott ja nicht beim Schlafen! L2L war letztes Jahr in Ordnung, dieses Jahr besser... aber nur wegen der Musik, die extrem wichtig ist, fand und finde ich (und auch meine Freunde) L2L irgendwie daneben gegangen. Aber die Verbindung ist einfach geil! Zumindest verständlich für anspruchsvollere Menschen! ;)

6-W2
Hallo! hier begrüßt euch die Karlsruher Jugend! Wir finden das Programm gut, bis auf die Musik, da ist es der Meinung, dass die ein wenig ruhiger sein könnte. Ansonsten gefällt uns alles, besonders der sprecher Stephan Sigg mit seinen Vorträgen, sie sind sehr stark. Aber auch der Beitrag der Moderatoren ist nicht zu verachten, ihr macht es super! Bei uns läuft alles problemlos, die Technik macht mit und es kommen immer mehr Leute, an erster Linie unsere bekannten, die wir eingeladen haben, aber auch andere, die durch Strassenaktion oder Plakate aufmerksam wurden, was wir natürlich alleine Gott zu verdanken haben. Herzliche Grüße! Konstantin.

7-W2
Salu! I ha numme schnall wella sägä dass der stephan eusi lütli direkt agschproche het. öpper wo die erschte öbe nid gseh het isch nocher zu mir cho und het mi gfoigt öb's immer so aschprechend gsi seig die letschte mol . Do heig er jo fascht chli öppis verpasst. tjal! uff jetdä fall !! no schnall es frögl; sit wenn het der stephan e brülle? und no es kompliment; tobi das war......ssssss! also?!... witermache !! hd kjell-bjarne hogganvik. K2

8-W2
Gruppe aus Aachen schreibt: 3. Abend... Heute habe wir zum "aufwärmen" Scharade gespielt und uns köstlich über die Versuche unserer Freunde amüsiert, Begiffe wie Schneemann, oder Luftschloss darzustellen. Letztes Mal haben wir uns ja alle vorgenommen Gäste einzuladen und noch mehr zu sein als bisher. Beides ist uns gegückt, wenn auch etwas anders als geplant. Alle unsere Freunde hatten Termine oder Ausreden (z.B. meinte die Mutter von einem Mädchen:"...die xxx darf nicht zu 'ner Sekte gehen..."), aber wir haben ja noch einige Termine um Leute einzuladen. Zu der Truppe der letzten Abende hat sich jetzt auch noch Carina Binebööel dazugesellt und das obwohl ihre Mutter zuerst nicht so begeistert war, sie von der familiären Sabbatanfangszeremonie freizustellen. Letztlich meinte sie aber, dass unser Einsatz ja so toll wäre und es ja nur ein paar Termine sind... Heute mußte Carina aber sofort nach dem Programm nach Hause, ich werde sie dann morgen mal fragen, wie es ihr gefallen hat, dann darf sie auch länger bleiben. Leider ist heute einige Male im Livestream das Bild und/oder der Ton ausgefallen, ob es damit zusammenhängt, dass wir auf zwei Rechnern gleichzeitig geschaut haben. Es wird aber viel befehlt und vielleicht schreiben wir diesbezüglich noch eine Mail an das Technikteam. Auf jeden Fall war die Ansprache und das gesamte Programm mal wieder Klasse und hat unserer Gruppe sehr gut gefallen. Wir sind schon gespannt was es morgen so gibt... Tschö bis morgen Roland
9-W2

10-W2
also, erst mal bitte ich dass das hier wenn es vorgelesen werden sollte anonym bleibt. ich finde dass Link2Life total coool is. ich gehe jeden abend gerne hin. und letzten samstag war stefan igler bei uns. ich glaube es hat ihm auch sehr gut gefallen. vor allem ist stefan sigg eine gute Wahl für den sprecher gewesen weil er die jugendlichen mit seiner art besonders gut ansprechen kann. und die moderatoren sind auch voll cool! die soapstars spielen voll gut, auch wenn die themen manchmal ein bisschen komisch sind. falls ihr das vorlesen wollt könnt ihr es verkürzen wir lachen immer viel.viele grüße noch an euch ! (aber könntet ihr das schlusslied nicht auch am amfang spielen. das gefällt mir sehr gut!

11-W2
Hallo Link2life! Ahm ja...hallo erst ma! Ich weiß gar nicht ob sie's wussten, aber ich bin der Markus und bin aus der Adventjugend Dresden! Samstag Abend hieß das Motto "Delete", und da dachte sich die Adventjugend Dresden, dass wir getreu dem Motto auch unser sauleckeres Abendessen "keimfrei" servieren! Es gab zum Beispiel koscheres Essen, das an diesem Abend wegging wie warme Semmeln! Darum haben unsere Barkeeper Mundschutz getragen und haben somit für eine "schädlings- und virenfreie Atmosphäre" gesorgt! Macht einfach weiter so mit eurer lockeren Art, damit noch viele, die nichts von Gott gehört haben, sich Link2life anschauen! Ok, soviel erstmals aus Dresden! Machts gut!

12-W2

13-W2
Hallo Wollte mal fragen, ob Ihr die Grüße wie letztes mal ins Netz stellen könntet? Hab nämlich gesehen, dass ich gegrillt worden bin, aber ich weiß nicht, wer mich hätt gegrillt hat. Wäre sehr nett. LG und weiterhin Gottes Segen Patrick aus Düisburg

PS Feedback: Würde einfach mal so sagen: Mir gefällt's. Freue mich schon sehr aufs nächste mal. Irgendwie schade, dass L2L schon Halbzeit hat... Musik würde ich als ja... sagen und wenn sogar nicht so wirklich gut. Also die Sänger sind nicht die besten bzw. die drollsten. Soup (oder wie mans auch immer schreibt) finde ich super. Solltet es nach L2L weiter machen =) Der Siggi ist einfach Spitze, da kann man einfach nix dazu sagen. Selbst unsere Gäste meinten, der Kerl ist einfach genial. Moderation wirkt etwas unsicher... Irgendwie schade... Im grossen und ganzen sage ich einfach mal: Spitze.

14-W2
Wir haben uns entschieden, über DVD die Aktion im Februar 2005 zu haben. Dank.

15-W2

16-W2

17-W2
hey - Freitag: Teilnehmer gesamt: 38 Gäste: 29 / > Samstag: Teilnehmer gesamt: 31 Gäste: 22 - am freitag war es ziemlich krass- wir hatten um 19.50 kein Signal und wir wussten nicht, was wir machen sollen, bei so vielen gasten- wir haben gebetet un gebetet- um 20.00Uhr immer noch keines- dann kam der rettende Engel- Werner aus unserer Gemeinde- es sah kurz hin und stellte fest, dass wir auf dem falschen programm waren- leichtsinnfehler- doch von uns hatte es keiner gemerkt. Um 20.15 hatten wir signal- 1 sekunde bevor stefan das reden gebann- WUNDER!...das war klar, dass das böse bei so veieln gasten alles versucht- doch JEsus hat gesiegt! liebe grüBe und gottes segen Sonja

18-W2

19-W2
Hallo Hier ist die Crew aus Verden. Wir wollten euch mal grüßen. Ihr macht das echt super, weiter so!!

20-W2
Hallo, ist ne tolle Sache Grüsse aus Ueken susi & Fredy

21-W2
ihnen gut und im kleinen Rahmenprogramm gibt es eine kleine Band, in der sich selbst die Jüngsten ans Schlagzeug wagen und mitmusizieren. Alle freuen sich auf das kommende L2L-Wochenende mit all den vielfältigen Impulsen! Ich wünsche euch allen viel Kraft, Freude und gutes Gelingen für die Arbeit an L2L und den vielen anderen Dingen, die ihr sicher "nebenbei" erledigen müsst. Liebe Grüße an euch alle ... Detlef

22-W2

Hy! Also ich muss sagen, das eure Veranstaltung dieses Jahr echt klasse ist... Stefans Predigten sind interessant und auch die Musik ist größtenteils ok. Macht weiter so! Sven.

23-W2


24-W2

geb dir zwei Feedback von Predigern mal weiter - denke, dass kann in die Sammlung ruhig rein.... Gruß, Martin: "... Aber es gibt viele Dinge worüber ich mich freue, am letzten Sabbat nach l2l kamen zwei 16jährige Jungs zu mir und drucksten bis es endlich raus war, sie wollen sich taufen lassen ... L2l ist für mich überhaupt eine sehr angenehme und positive Erfahrung, ich kann nur nicht nachvollziehen, daß sich "große" Gemeinden wie Charlottenburg und Neukölln das entgehen lassen - muß ich vielleicht auch nicht. ... " Gottes Segen für Euch - Ihr seid spitze, Martin! Und ich frage mir immer, wie Ihr das überhaupt schafft - wohl keinesfalls ohne Gottes Hilfe :-)"

25-W2


26-W2

Hallo Leute, ich hab die Fragen als Hilfsmittel vermisst (wie beim 1+2.Abend);- die waren nämlich sehr gut! gibt's da noch was?

27-W2

Hallo Ich habe wiederum die Feedbackkarten aufgewährtet und fasse alles kurz zusammen: - Die Instrumentalisten der Band finden sie wirklich gut. - Die Sänger bemängeln viele! Was immer wieder auffällt ist, dass sie ihre Lieder nicht auswendig singen. Sollte unbedingt geändert werden. - Die Soaps (weiss nicht wie man das schreibt) finden alle Klasse. - Die Interviews haben an Tiefgang gewonnen und sie schätzen es, dass die Moderatorin am Schluss nicht noch einmal alles zusammenfasst. DANKE für die Änderung. Liebe Grüße

28-W2

Hallo Ihr Lieben, habt Ihr unsre tollen Cocktail Werbebilder vergessen???? Die konnten wir nämlich nicht im Netz finden. Dabei haben wir uns so viel Mühe gegeben einen grünen Cocktail zu kredenzen, der nicht mit Alkohol (Blue Curacao) zubereitet ist. Das haben wir übrigens zu bemängeln, nämlich dass Rezepte mit Alkohol im Netz veröffentlicht sind. Ganz liebe Grüße und bis bald, CPA - Altenmarkt

29-W2


30-W2

Ich finde es Blöd das die Größe imma dan gezeigt werden wenn die Veranstaltung zu ende ist! vor 2 jahren fand ichs besser das mit den grünen! aber sonst ist alles richtig gut!

31-W2

Hallo liebes L2L- Team! Ich möchte Euch erst mal ein großes Dankeschön aussprechen, dass Ihr Euch wieder so viel Mühe macht und eine Jugendevangelisation durchführt! Ich höre die Verkündigungen von Stephan wahnsinnig gerne und finde sie auch sehr ansprechend. Nur das Rahmenprogramm, da habt Ihr leider völlig daneben getroffen. Die Soap ist ohne Message, die Musik gut, aber die Sänger empfinden es scheinbar als unzumutbar vor der Kamera singen zu müssen, ihrem Gesicht nach zu urteilen. Vielleicht könnten sie mal lächeln, dann würde man ihnen ihre Message auch eher glauben! Ansonsten ein ganz dickes
Lob und weiter so! Eure Hannah

32-W2 Eine Anmerkung: Es wirkt irgendwie komisch, wenn das Seting ein Internetcafé sein soll, dass die Leute an den Tischen, während Stefan redet, wie eingefroren dasitzen - sie müssten irgendwas machen, tuscheln, was trinken, am PC sitzen etc...


36-W2 Vielen Dank für die Änderungen. Im Gegensatz zu manch anderem habe ich sie erkannt. Der 4te Abend war fast 20min kürzer als der erste. Fragt mal eure Technik vor Ort. Die Message ist kürzer. Obwohl ich immer noch nicht verstehe warum stephan die leute immer zweimal von 0% auf 100% bringt mit der message. Die Band spielt gut zusammen, exzellent, besser geht's nicht. Aber müssen es immer so tiefgehende songs sein? Können es nicht einfache songs sein? Vll. mal was englisches? Der Herr der Ringe-Ring von Eri war auch ein nettes Accesoire! Jadranka könnte auch mal lachen... das wurde bei uns angemerkt.. schließlich aht sie ja eine frohe botschaft zu verbreiten... wir spielen ja nicht Joel oder? Die Soap wird immer besser.. Maria und Tobias harmonieren... nur Tobi kann meiner meinung nach noch mehr aus sich rauskommen. Aber hier ist mein grösster Kritikpunkt... bitte meine beiden lieben... vermeidet kanalnäisch... das wird immer mehr jeden abend... :j jasmin ist aufgetaut.. super... maria auch... so hektisch... kommt super rüber... der Abspann der stimme am Rand ist super... vll. den Farbtion varieren... und ne hintergrundgrafik noch rein... wasserzeichenmäßig... aber die idee an der seite es zu handhaben, ist schon mal super. Das interview bekommt immer mehr kürze.. und dadurch Würze. Wie wir bei fat7 schon lange herausbekommen haben... ist die ideale länge für so ein programm, wie es link2life oder der programm-teil bei einem fat7-abend ist, um die 45 min. Ich denke um die Zeit wird es sich auch bei link2life einpendeln. Sehr begrüßenswert. Länger gemeinsam fernsehschauen ohne werbeunterbrechung bei jugendlichen geht kaum.. Also nochmal großes Lob! Macht weiter so. Wenn ihr weiter so auf verbesserungsvorschläge eingeht dann ist es ja schon am nächsten abend perfekt! Wie perfekt wird dann der 8te Abend sein? ihr seid gut.. hochachtungsvoll cajuz

37-W2 Hallo ihr da!!! im Auftrag der Adventjugend Leipzig und unseren Gästen möchte ich euch


39-W2 ich hab ja keine ahnung nach welchen kriterien ihr gecastet habt, aber ein tiefer Ausgeschnitt beim interview und bauchfreie sängerin sind ja wohl in dieser sendung voll daneben!!! und bitte nie wieder vergleiche mit jesus-house; miissen wir uns auch noch offentlich bestätigen, dass wir auch was drauf haben?! echt peinlich! trotzdem DANKE! für das, was ihr uns liefert und danke stefan s. für deine deutlichen worte, weiter so....GOTT segne euch


41-W2 Hallo Leute, ich wollte den drei Moderatoren (Jasmin, Maria und Tobi) nur für das Wochenende die Daumen drücken. Ihr seid wirklich klasse! @Tobi: Ich hoffe, dein Nacken spielt mit! @Maria: Alle Ossis stehen das Weekend hinter dir - frag mal den Knolli ;-) @Jasmin: Mach dir nicht so einen Kopf, du machst das echt gut! Viele Grüße aus Kiel, Marco.

42-W2 Sarah+Renate aus AN grißen den super süßen moderator Tobi, deine versprecher sind total goldig!!!!

43-W2 Viele Grüße von den Chemnitzern an unsere Maria!!!!!! Wir sind stolz auf dich!!!!!

Feedback L2L 2004 / Third Weekend

1-W3 Stephan Sigg ist echt genial ;-) er spricht junge leute sehr gut an und erzählt überzeugend! weiter so!! L2L ist einfach gut dieses Jahr, und die sprecher auch, und besonders die anpiele sind ganz lustig und anprechend. Die wahl der musik ist gut und die idee mit der l2l-band auch; ABER!!!!! MIT DEN SÄNGER IST ES EINFACH SCHRECKLICH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! WIE KÖNNt ihr euch so blamieren???????????????????????ICH HABE SEHR SELTEN SOLCHE LEUTE GESEHEN DIE NICHT SINGEN KÖNNEN WIE DIE!!!!!!! ich bin sprachlos. =) ansonsten hat mir alles gefallen wie gesagt! es tut mir echt leid...wirklich, aber irgendjemand muss das sagen.

2-W3 Moin, liebe Grüße von Lüneburger Jugend! Wollten mal kurz erzählen was das bei uns ist. Wir versammeln uns im Advent-Verlag in Lüneburg, jaja genau aus der Stelle wo die ganze Adventi Bücher gemacht werden. Also wir treffen uns schon um 19 uhr, hören bisschen Musik, reden mit einander, natürlich gibt es immer was zu essen (nur knabber zueg), um 19:30 sind wir alle schon bisschen aufgeregt, weil um 19:40 oder so kommen immer Grüße auf die wir uns als Jugendgruppe sehr sehr freuen. Wir sind meistens so 25 - 35 leuts und das ist echt super... Der knaller kommt jetzt und zwar, vor Link2Life haben wir mit der Jugend
intensiv für Org usw von L2L gebetet und dann natürlich für sachen was wir uns wünschen, als Jugend "1" der Luneburger Gemeinden, haben wir uns gewünscht, dass wir paar mal bei L2L genau 20 Gäste haben, Gott hat unsere Gebete erhört, am ersten Abend hatten genau 20 Gäste + unsere Jugend... ist das nicht toll, so viele Gäste haben wir aber immer noch... Natürlich werden wir uns freuen wenn ihr alle mal nach Lüneburg kommt... Also dann ab nach Lüneburg, wir freuen uns sehr auf Euch....

3-W3
Hallo liebes Link2life Team, ich habe eure Sendungen jetzt 2mal gesehen. Das mit der Bar ist eine tolle Idee ist, aber ich bin der Meinung das es nicht zu "Adventisten" passt und gehört. Das mag sein dass dort keine Alkohol ist aber wenn ein Fremder das siet da wird er mit Sicherheit sagen "was seit Ihr für Adventisten, ihr behabtet das ihr kein Alkohol trinkt und was ist das?" Das ist ja gut wenn die Leute darüber sprechen was die da gesehen haben, aber was ist wenn die sich das anschauen und wieder gehen? Ich habe leider Beobachten müssen wie jemand gleich nach dem "Amen" gegangen ist und das ist Schade. Ich wünsche euch Gottes Segen in eurer Arbeit. Grüß Peter

4-W3

5-W3

6-W3
Hey L2L Team, da ihr ja gestern berichtet habt es hätte so viele anfragen wegen stefans brille gegeben (ich habs übrigens net bemerkt das die neu ist *g*) hab ich ein bild rausgekramt wo er noch keine brille hat, vom pfingstjugendtreffen in neufrankenroda, 2002. Stefan sigg, am 13. Mai 2002 da hatte er übrigens seinen kletterunfall gerade erst kürzlich überstanden und musste mit krücken auf die bühne stolpem, was seiner guten verköndigung jedoch nix abgetan hat! ich wünsch euch und stefan weiterhin alles gute, l2l ist echt fett! (bis auf die musik...) grüß, euer Andi Adventjugend Wetzlar

7-W3
wurde dann auch schnell wieder fallen gelassen, weil der Aufwand zu groß ist und es zuviel Arbeit ist. Das war die Meinung von nur 2 Leuten. 2 Leute, wovon einer unser Jugendleiter ist, der volle Autorität besitzt und dessen Meinung, wenn er sie einmal kundgetan hat, Maß und Gesetz für alle anderen ist, so dass kaum einer wagt nur ansatzweise zu widersprechen. Ähnliches hab ich vor 2 Monaten zu unserem JugendCafé fat7 gehört. Damals haben wir darüber diskutiert, was wir verbessern wollen, als unser Jugendleiter aufstand und sagte, er übernimmt bei fat7 keine Verantwortung mehr und alle anderen müssen das auch nicht, wenn sie nicht wollen! Wer da noch mithelfen möchte, solle sich beim Holger melden. Und das nachdem wir vor einem Jahr als Jugendkem fat7 für uns als Jugend als Vision zusammen beschlossen haben. Ähnliches steht uns nächstes Wochenende bevor, wenn wir das MovieCode-WE in Essen haben. Gestern Abend hat ein Großteil der Jugend beschlossen nach Hannover zur Gospelnight zu fahren. Dabei wurde das MovieCode-WE wegen ihnen nach Essen gelegt, aber damit hat die Jugend ja nichts zutun, weil die Leute interessieren dann Filme doch nicht so sehr... Das WE hat ja auch die Gemeindeleistung, Prediger und Vereinigung eingestellt und nicht die Jugend. Ich bin platt und fertig nach dem gestrigen Abend und kann nicht sagen, ob Essen am letzten L2L-WE noch dabei ist. Wir würden zwar eigentlich am 4. Dezember mit fat7 Geburtstag feiern, aber mir ist überhaupt nicht mehr danach zu Mute. Mir fehlt die Kraft, Motivation und der winzige Lichtblick bei meiner Jugend. Wünsche und hoffe, das es euch als L2L-Leitungsteam nicht so ergeht! Ihr macht eine klasse Arbeit, auch wenn nicht immer alles so glatt gelaufen ist, aber ihr steigert euch! Habt weiterhin meine Unterstützung in Sachen AJ-Webteam, egal was in Essen noch passiert. Gott segne L2L und euch! Und tschüss! Holger

8-W3


9-W3

Ich fand euren chat ganz erträglich , bis ich euren jämmerlichen admin KENNY kennen lernen musste der hat mich immer gekickt das fanden ich und meine kumpelz so lacherlich, das ihr jetzt mit sicherheit 2chter weniger habt!!! (späte Einsicht aber wenigstens!!! Besser spät als nie!!!)

10-W3


11-W3


12-W3

Hi, wann ist eigentlich das nächste mal L2L? Ich freue mich schon sehr auf das Thema
Enjoy it !!!Ich bin jedes mal bei der Feedback Auswertung gespannt, ob ihr was von Erfurt sagt !!! Marco aus Weimar


14-W3 Hallo L2L-Team, wir sind die Jugendgruppe Fellbach (bei Stuttgart) Südslawen (ex-Jugo). Wir sind das zweite Mal bei L2L dabei und die Andachten von Stephan sind einfach Spitze. Wir würden uns sehr freuen wenn Ihr unsere Deko und Gruppe bei einem der letzten zwei Abende zeigen würdet. Liebe Grüße Jugendgruppe Fellbach


16-W3 Dieser Abend (5.) hat an die letzten beiden Abende angeschlossen. Er war wirklich super! - die Soap war gelungen und von der Länge her genau richtig - die Musik war gut, ich empfand es als besonders gelungen wie ihr die Lieder den Sängern zugeordnet habt! Der Sänger hatte das rhythmischere Lied gesungen. Es hat gut zu ihm passt da er meiner Empfindung nach räumlich sing/sich bewegt. Wiederrum der weibliche Gesang hat auch gut zu den melodischen Stücken passt. - die Kameraführung war sehr gut (besonders bei der Musik; danke, dass ihr nicht durch den Pfeiler gefilmt habt) - die Moderatoren war heute sehr gut (Tobi wirkte nicht so aufgeregt wie die letzten male) - Studio gast war ok so - Steffans Verkündigung war auch supi (dass die Sachen die er an hatte fand ich das letzte mal ein kleines bisschen besser) - bekannte Menschen als Lebensbeispiele finde ich sehr gut (wie z.B. den Schwimmer heute oder Eminem) - das Gebet empfinde ich manchmal als zu schnell gesprochen (heute war es von der Schnelligkeit her schon besser). Ich fiel echt super, dass ihr auf Kritik und Verbesserungswünsche eingeht! Man merkt euer Bemühen besonders in der Musik. Das finde ich wirklich total genial, dass ihr versucht immer besser zu werden und nicht in eurer alleinigen Schiene fahrt. Das hat mein Bild der adventistischen Leitung ein bisschen aufpoliert: Weiter so!!! Danke.

17-W3 Liebe Grüße von der Gemeinde Dillenburg an das link2life-Team. Ihr macht Eure Sache sehr gut. Macht weiter so! Wir haben keine Jugend, sind aber jeden Abend dabei.


20-W3 Hallo! Gibt es die link2life- Abende auch als Video? Würde ich cool finden, weil man da an Abenden wo man mal wieder so ne geniale Predigt hören will, einfach ein Video reinschieben brauch! Gott segne euch!M acht weiter so!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Matthias


22-W3 Ich wollte nur sagen, dass es mir sehr gut gefällt, vor allem Stephan. Aber die Musik ist nicht so genial...

473
23-W3  Hallo Ihr von L2L :) Zuerst möchte ich euch für die gelungenen Themen & deren Umsetzung gratulieren. Ich finde's klasse, wie die Moderatoren sich ihrer Aufgabe stellen..., mir würde dafür der "Arsch in der Hose" fehlen *g*. Die Anspiele zu Beginn jeder Sendung sind ebenfalls ziemlich gut ;) Alerdings gibt's auch störendes.....zumindest empfinde ich das so....?!! 1. - der Ton der Sänger ist im Verhältnis zur Musik (Band) zu leise. Man hört stellenweise die singende(n) Person(en) nicht deutlich bzw. gar nicht mehr. 2. - heute sprach der Moderator (in der Computercke) davon, dass wir jetzt Bilder sehen.......außer einem Elefantenwitz der als Laufband eingebendet wurde, sah man leider keine Bilder (jetzt das vorher, nun das nachher = nix war zu sehen). 3. - funzt das umschalten von einer Kamera auf die nächste nicht immer zeitrichtig bzw. starrt der Moderierende schon 10sek. In die Kamera bis es im Programm weiter geht oder die Musik beginnt. Ich arbeite zwar im Rettungsdienst & habe von TV-Technik nicht allzu viel Ahnung..., aber sowas darf einfach nicht passieren. Es kann doch nicht sein das ihr es nicht merkt, dass einige Bilder (welche grade angepriesen werden) nicht gesendet werden!! Auch solltet ihr mal einen TV aufstellen mit dem ihr das Programm vom Satelliten empfängt (falls noch nicht getan)...., wie schon geschrieben ist die Musik zu laut bzw. der Ton des/der Singenden zu leise gedreht - kann bei euch im Saal ja ganz anders ankommen??! Sowas sollte sich doch aber beheben lassen....?!! Nix desto trotz......macht weiter - alles in allem macht ihr's seeeeeehr gut !!! Gruß & schönen Abend noch... Jan (Jugend Bln.-Köpenick)

24-W3  Liebes Link2life-Team, Mir ist gestern schon aufgefallen, dass bei den Musikbeiträgen die SängerInnen etwas leise herüberkommen. Könnt ihr die etwas mehr herausholen? Danke! Liebe Grüße, Moritz

25-W3  Hallo Maria, Tobias und den Rest des Link2life Teams.


28-W3  Tobi könnte ruhig noch nen Rap vorsingen, war nämlich mega genial!!

Feedback L2L 2004 / Fourth Weekend

1-W4  Hallo Ihr Lieben, erst jetzt komme ich dazu, Euch auch zu schreiben. Ich bin Jugendleiterin in Penzberg. Ich möchte Euch sagen, dass ich so überwältigt und dankbar bin, für dass, was Gott hier in Penzberg gemacht hat. Link 2 live war echt gesegnet man konnte es hier sehen und spüren. Auf dem Heimweg vom zweiten Abend saß ich im Auto und mir liefen so die Tränken, weil ich so dankbar war, dass Gott "meiner" Jugend gezeigt hat, dass ER mit ihnen ist und ihren tollen Einsatz so segnet. Jeden Abend die tollsten Mixgetränke (natürlich ohne
Prozente) und ein Buffet vom Feinsten. Und wenn man dann die Leute sieht, die kommen Gepiercte, Langhaarige, Alte, Kinder, Schicke, Bauchfreie, ganze Familien und sie alle miteinander fühlen sich einfach wohl, auch wenn von diesem bunt durcheinander gewürfelten Haufen auch einige noch gar nicht verstehen, worum es da eigentlich geht mit diesem Jesus, so vertraue ich doch voll diesem alles möglich machenden Gott, dass er das Gehörte bei diesen Menschen ordnet und ihnen wenn die Zeit dafür gekommen ist, das Verständnis dafür schenkt. Ich denke, dass kein einziger Satz, den Menschen über Jesus hören, verloren gehen wird, auch wenn man ihn noch gar nicht versteht. Ein Junge war da, der am zweiten Abend wiedergekommen, weil er zu Hause allein war und ihm bei uns das Essen, Getränke und Umfeld einfach gut getan haben. Ein Jugendlicher ist im Sommer das erste mal in die Gemeinde gekommen und hatte seinen ersten "Einsatz" bei Link2live. 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5-W4  also Link2life fand ich persönlich richtig klasse. Ich bin froh das gesehen zu haben und euch allen dankbar das ihr das "Projekt" dieses Jahr habt laufen lassen. Ich hoffe das es trotz bedenken dennoch bald wieder eine Übertragung geben wird.:0) :O Was ich von unseren Jugendlichen, Teenies gehört habe war hauptsächlich nur gutes. Die Message und auch wie Stefan es rüber bringt ist einfach ne Wucht. Ich fand das er von abend zu abend immer besser wurde. Auch die Soap wurde immer mit interess verfolgt. Auch von mir aus ein recht herzliches dankeschön an die Schüler die das mitgemacht haben. Die Musik ist da vielleicht nicht so gut rüber gekommen aber darüber lässt sich sicher auch bis in alle ewigkeit sicher noch streiten oder reden. Schade fand ich persönlich das nicht noch mehr Interviews da waren bzw. das sie leider auch in meinen Augen was kurz waren....aber dann wäre der message-Teil vielleicht zu kurz gekommen...darüber kann man sicher auch ewig reden. :O) Am vorletzten Abend war noch eine Person da gewesen die ein wenig kritisch gegenüber L2L war und sie sagte auch am ende das es gut gewesen war.:O Ich bin sehr froh das es Lik2life gab und gibt (und wenns jetzt für die nächste zeit nur noch als Web-Seite gibt). Mich hat es an einige Stellen wieder zum nachdenken gebracht und sicher auch all die anderen Leute die da waren. Ich bin auch froh und dankbar für all die Arbeit die ihr alle da reingebracht habt. Wir hatten die letzten Abenden nur noch mini Probleme an einigen stellen mit der Übertragung. :0) Ja ich weiß nicht ob du das weitergeben kannst....aber wenn ja dann kannst du ein recht Herzliches Dankeschön an die Schüler die das mitgemacht haben (ob jetzt vor oder hinter den Kameras). ganz liebe Grüß RoBO)


7-W4  HI Benny Elena hier. Bin traurig das L2L jetzt schon zu Ende ist, konnte viel mehr davon vertragen! Das Ende war gut und ich freu mich schon aufs nächste mal L2L!


9-W4  Hallo... so, das war es nun also mit Link2life für dieses Jahr und vielleicht für die nächsten paar Jahre... Für unsere Gruppe war es auf jeden Fall eine Bereicherung, wir waren gemeinsam auf dem Vorbereitungs Wochenende und konnten uns und auch andere Adventis näher kennenlernen. Das war vor allem für die Madels gut, da sie sonst nie aus Aachen rausgekommen wären. Auch für ein Paar Jugendliche in unserer Gemeinde war es endlich mal wieder eine Möglichkeit sich etwas leichtere Kost zu Gemiite zu führen. Es scheint mir sogar so, dass unsere inoffizielle Jugendgruppe ein wenig mehr akzeptiert wird, als es vorher der Fall war. Für mich war es zwar auch ein wenig stressig, da wir immer aufräumen, spülen, vorbereiten etc müßten, aber ich finde, es hat sich gelohnt. Wir konnten zwar leider keine "echten" Gäste verzeichnen, aber vielleicht konnten wir den Glauben einiger Leute stärken und den Horizont einiger Zweifler erweitern. Ich bin froh, dass wir die technischen Möglichkeiten hatten L2L zu verfolgen. Bleibt zu hoffen, dass wir jetzt endlich von der Gemeinde als Jugend akzeptiert und unterstützt werden, aber das steht auf einem anderen Blatt... Auch wenn einige Dinge wieder für Diskussionen sorgen werden (Musik, Soap, etc) fand ich es waren gelungene Abende und über die rednerischen Fähigkeiten von Stephan wurde ja schon viel gelobt... Auf jeden Fall noch einmal ein riesiges Lob an alle Beteiligten! Und natürlich an dich, dass du vor Ort tätig warst. Ich hoffe es wird doch noch einmal eine solche Veranstaltung geben, die uns als Gruppe weiter zusammenschweißt und uns für Gäste und deren Bedürfnisse sensibilisiert. Bis zum nächsten Treffen, Roland

Herr segne Dich, Bernd

11-W4 Wir finden super was ich macht!!!! Die Andachten sind spitze und auch die Soap ist klasse. Weiter so .... Viele Grüße Christin und Martin - P.S:Auch auf der Höhe haben wir uns vollgefühlt, das Essen war lecker ...

12-W4 Anfangs kam große kritik gegenüber der Musik auf, aber ich muss sagen dass die Band von mal zu mal besser harmoniert hat und mir zum ende hin richtig gut gefallen hat. Ich find L2L ist eine klasse Möglichkeit das Evangelium für junge Leudz schmackhaft zu machen und auch seine Freunde mal mit zu bringen, ohne dass man sich „schämen“ muss. © Blume


Feedback L2L 2004 / 1. Evening: 29.11.2004 - Local Venues

1-1 Die Veranstaltung hat uns sehr gut Gefallen. Die Namen der Personen die gerade Sprechen sollten in einer anderen farbe sein da Die weissen namen sehr schwer zu lesen sind. vielleicht könnte die musig ein bisschen rockiger sein.

2-1 Unser ältester Teilnehmer war 76 Jahre alt. Wir hatten viele Gäste aus Gemeinden die L2L nicht selbst übertragen.

3-1 hat alles super geklappt! hoffe die anderen abende werden auch so :); oder noch besser

4-1 Es war ein toller Abend mit guter Atmosphäre bei uns!

5-1 Rahmen und message gut. Weiter so!! Musik kam nicht bei allen gut an. Aber kein Problem

6-1 was wollt Ihr bei "Sonstiges" wissen, wenn die Eingabe hier erforderlich ist? Die Jugendgruppe der FCG Uelzen (Pfingstgemeinde); war bei uns zu Gast.

7-1 kleine technichnische Probleme, gute message!

8-1 Der Abend war super. Danke

9-1 Anmerkungen: - Bühnenbild war gelungen - Soap war ansprechend - Interview war etwas zu lang - Stephans Message war stellenweise zu seicht (Evolution); wobei er im zweiten Teil die Zuhörer gut angesprochen hat - die Band war gut (vielleicht wäre eine jugendgemäße Musik besser

10-1 Es war gut. Den Gästen und uns hat es sehr gefallen. Danke.

11-1 Wir hatten eigene Livemusik, Bistro und einen Gebetsraum. Alles zusammen lief es richtig gut

12-1 Noch mitten in der letzten Vorbereitungen, ging die Tür auf und die Leude kamen herein. So viele auf einmal, dass wir echt erst mal ein wenig im Chaos versunken sind, weil wir auf so viele Leude nicht vorbereitet waren. Dennoch war das Chaos nur von kurzer Dauer.

13-1 Gästen gefiel es leider nicht.

14-1 Die ersten beiden Lieder waren zu melankolisch. Verkündigung war gut.

15-1 im großen und ganzen ein super Abend die Ansprache war wirklich ansprechend es wirkte etwas weniger professionell wie das letzte L2L und ab und zu sah es nach einem Abklatsch von Jesus House aus aber wir sind guter Dinge, dass die kommende Abende immer professioneller werden und wir auch weiterhin ein hammermaßiges Event erleben werden. Wir beten für euch

16-1 Der Moderator Tobi könnte mal ein wenig lächeln. Das Publikum könnte auch mal bitte gezeigt werden.

17-1 Guter Empfang, tolle Beleuchtung, klare Botschaft, lernende Moderatoren, abwechslungsreiche Kameraführung

18-1 toller abend, aber die Musik ist nicht so ganz treffend für uns Jugendliche... Stephan Sigg ist toll!!

19-1 vorprogramm (interview, anspiel) etwas langatmig ... dass an einigen stellen durch lautes gähnen im zuschauerraum dokumentiert wurde. message von stefan o.k. bisschen schwarz weiss halt

20-1 Musik war nicht für die Zielgruppe der 13-20 jährigen geeignet; Interview war zu langatmig; Soap war gut – Schauspieler noch etwas steif; Verkündigung war sehr gut

21-1 Botschaft von Stefan kam sehr gut an. Einzig die Musik wird sehr unterschiedlich aufgenommen.
22-1 - gute Verkündigung - Interview etwas zu lang

23-1 Wir haben als Vorpogramm Getränke und Knabbereien angeboten und anschließend als Nachprogramm eine Cocktailbar eröffnet. Es hat den Teilnehmern soweit gut gefallen.


25-1 Die Musik reisste uns nicht von den Stühlen. War aber alles in allem ein SUPER Start - gratuliere und danke!!


27-1 Die SängerInnen fand man im allgemeinen schlecht

28-1 Wir fanden Stephens messages total genial!!!

29-1 Genialer Start!

30-1 Obwohl der Abend von uns nicht organisiert war, hat das Prinzip Freunde einzuladen uns viele Gäste verschenkt. Auch das Banner am Gemeindehaus hat Passanten bewegt herein zu schauen und bis zum Ende zu bleiben. Spricht für Stephan

31-1 Gelungener Anlass! Das interview dauerte aber viel zu lange!

32-1 Stephans T-shirt war zu gelb

33-1 sehr schön. wie hatten ein Link 2 Life taxi, sind in die stad und haben Leute spontan abgeholt, haben flyer verteilt. echt guter abend. viele Gäste möchten wiederkommen!

34-1 laut feedbackkarten fand das publikum den abend echt gut bis intresant

35-1 Zufrieden stellend

36-1 hat größtenteils allen sehr gut gefallen.

37-1 Wir haben mit der Jugend gebetet, 4 wochen lange vor dem L2L das wir am ersten Abend, genau 20 Gäste haben, hatten wir auch! Juhuuuu

38-1 Abend war OK, bis auf die Nervosität der Moderatoren. Anspiel wirkte etwas "Vermummten".

39-1 Viele fanden den Abend echt gut.

40-1 Ohne Ton - problem intern

41-1 gute Stimmung--leider mehr als die Hälfte der eigenen Jugend verhindert--ansonsten: unsere Lounge macht sich toll

42-1 War ein toller gelungener Abend mit 007.

43-1 Die Feedback waren durchgehend positiv, die Stimmung war sehr gut.

44-1 eine super atmosphäre gehabt

45-1 Kommt gut an. Die Moderation vor dem Thema wird allgemein als zu lang und teilweise unprofessionell empfunden.
cooler Abend

Heute waren die Gäste nicht so zahlreich, dafür waren von unseren Jugendlichen soviele, wie schon lange nicht mehr da.

Wir haben uns über so viele Gäste gefreut.


Kommentare von Besuchern: Alle Bewertungen echt gut oder interessant; sehr gute Botschaft, weiter so!! Das Drumherum (Musik und Moderation) besser als das letzte Mal, aber immer noch nicht richtig zufriedenstellend.

gute Diskussion im Anschluß an die Verkündigung.

es war eine diskussionsfreudige Gruppe an Gästen, mit denen wir noch bis 23:00 Uhr zusammensaßen, über Gott und die Welt diskutierten.

Die message von Stephan Sigg war gut.

Da wir keine Satellitenanlage haben und nur eine kleine Gemeinde von 10 Personen sind, finden die Veranstaltungen bei uns eine Woche später statt. Aber, wir sind dabei!!

Die Übertragung war ok! Nur einer der Gäste äußerte sich etwas "beleidigt" über die Darstellungen gegen die Evolution. War nicht ganz glücklich! Ansonsten, weiter so!

Die Gruppe fand die Massage vom Stephan sehr gelungen...weiter so Stephan, leider wird die Musik sehr kritisiert

Eris Frisur ist lächerlich,sorry wegen der dirketheit, aber er ist doch keine 13 mehr

Keine wirklichen Gäste, da wir es mit unserer Jugend aktuell nicht anders schaffen könnten, deswegen nur eigene Jugendliche (evtl. Freunde)

Stefan Sigg ist sehr geeignet als Sprecher, da er die Zielgruppe anspricht. Ein bischen weniger Show von seiner Seite wäre auch O.K. Die Musikband entspricht nicht dem Alter der Zielgruppe. Die Soap ist zu sehr aus den Medien übernommen, die Leute wollen etwas anderes sehen, als das was den ganzen Tag im Fernsehen läuft.

Die Verkündigung war sehr gut. Die Musik eher für die mittlere Generation. Als Gäste zählen wir alle nicht STA Jugendlichen.

The message was great!!!!!

ähm, ja. War Sehr gut, nur das Die Sänger nicht unbedingt singen können. Zumindest sagen das die Gäste......

bei uns läuft es zählich reibunglos ab

Moderation gut, Gespräch mit dem Gast sehr gut, Verkündigung sehr gut

In Chemnitz treffen sich mehrere Jugendgruppen und bringen sich ein - der Kontakt tut uns gut - das Programm kommt super rüber

nachanfänglichen Schwierigkeiten guter Empfang


Alles hat gut geklappt und die Veranstaltung ist bei auch bei unseren Gästen gut angekommen, wenn auch das Interview als etwas langatmig empfunden wurde.

musik kommt nicht gut an. der rest ist super.

Wir treffen uns in der Teestube. Die überwiegenden Gäste sind unglaublich und können sich leider nur schwach auf die Verkündigung konzentrieren. Aber sie kommen trotzdem gern.

Guter erster Abend, besser als vor 2 Jahren, irgendwie professioneller,

wenige Besucher, aber sehr interessierte.

Hier einige Kommentare von den Feedbackkarten: Die Predigt war sehr interessant, aber die Band ist doof. Die Sänger sind echt lustig und die Moderation etwas affektiert. Der Vortrag war echt gut.

Die Verkündigungen vom Stephan Sigg sind einfach genial, das Vorprogramm und die Musik wird nicht ganz so angenommen. Karsten

viel Werbung - Team von 3 Leuten - hohe Erwartungen - wenig Besuch

Leider hatte uns die Technik einen Streich gespielt; haben den Vortrag dann aber die Woche drauf nachgeholt.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback L2L 2004 / 2. Evening: 30.11.2004 - Local Venues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
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<td>26-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 28-2 | Haben am Anfang leider kein Bild bekommen:-(

480

Es vermittelte sich besser als 1. Abend

Ein sehr schöner Abend!!!! wir waren beglückt

Auch dieser Abend war sehr gelungen und hat Anklang gefunden.

Abend war OK.

Auf dem Speicher siehe Mail anschl. Teestunde super Abend

Alles o.k.

Am Freitag Abend haben alle Teilnehmer für den nächsten Abend abgesagt. Bei den kommenden Terminen sind wir wieder dabei!


Kommentare von Gästen: Sehr gute Botschaft!

ihr seid super! macht weiter so!

Thema und Abend waren Spitze. Dies wurde auch so von den Gästen empfunden. Danke!

Die Ansprüche sind gut.

es entwickeln sich diskussionspunkte über L2L

Siehe erstes Feedback - bessere Resonanz bei unseren Jugendlichen als erwartet.

An diesem Abend hatten wir als Gast eine Frau mittleren Alters, welche durch das Plakat in unserem Schaukasten aufmerksam wurde und spontan kam, weil Sie bei NET-Veranstaltungen der Gemeinde für Erwachsene früher schon einmal teilnahm.

Bei uns genießen jung und alt die spritzig Gute Nachricht. Musik ist ein bissel langweilig...vielleicht mal die Begleitung ändern. Liebe Grüße und Gottes Segen, Eure Altenmarter

Die Verkündigung kam gut an. Weiter so und Gottes Segen für kommendes Wochenende.

Wir sind stolz auf unser! Maria!

Die Musik ist immer noch schlecht: der jungen Mann von der Band kann einfach nicht singen. Der Vortrag von Stephan wieder einmal super gut!!! Es könnte von Stephan noch abwechslungsreicher werden (eingespielte Fotos, Filausschnitte etc.)

Wir hatten einen Gast zu Besuch, der zunächst per Internet link2life angesehen hat, und sich nun entschlossen hat selbst life dabei zu sein. Unsere Adresse hat er sich ebenfalls aus dem Internet geholt. Euch einen lieben Gruß Franz

Eine Gruppe von 10 Türken sind hier mitgezählt, sie gingen aber ziemlich bald... Hatten sich wohl was anderes vorgestellt und haben dann nur gestört. Aber es waren Gäste von der Straße!


Endlich mal viele Gäste!!!! wir danken Gott für sein wirken

Wir sind begeistert!!!

Die Ansprache von Stephan, die Band war nach der Aussage der Teilnehmer sehr Ansprechend. War super, weiter so! Gottes Segen Euch!

Leider ist bei unseren Gästen die Feedbackkarte nicht so hoch im Trend. Trotz Motivationsversuchen

bestes Thema, gute Soap, bestes Interview. Paßt auf, dass die Technik nicht zur Routine wird - da waren die etsen zwei Abende besser

Außer den 4 Gästen waren auch der Prediger und die Mutter einer Jugendlichen anwesend.

Die Predigt war heute eucht klasse hat mir echt gefallen. Bis dann Be Blessed

Der heutige Abend war einfach atemberaubend, wir hatten nicht nur enorm viele Gäste, denen es total gut gefallen hat, sondern auch die Stimmung war super! Wir haben wie immer treff um 19:00 Uhr gemacht, dann noch eine kurze persönliche Andacht vor dem Vortrag.
Und anschließend ging es noch weiter mit unserer Cocktailbar. Mit Latino-Musik wirkte unsere 'Bar' wie mitten auf Cuba. Auch der Vortrag war heute extrem gut und hat viele persönlich berührt! Man hat heute wirklich den Segen gespürt den Gott auf die Veranstaltung gelegt hat. Einfach genial!

9-3 Verkündigung ist wieder sehr gut angekommen!!!!
10-3 Schön war’s

11-3 Trotz befürchtetem aktiven Personalmangel ist der Abend gut verlaufen und hat sogar 1-2 passive Jugendliche aus der Reserve gelockt.
12-3 thema war sehr ansprechend und treffend formuliert super!
13-3 Super Verkündigung! Gutes Programm. Weiter so!!!
14-3 Die Message war super. der ton leider etwas unkonstant. Manchmal etwas laut dann wieder zu tief und plötzlich wieder höher....

15-3 Verkündigung gut, Interview sehr gut, Soap ging so
16-3 über die Steigerung in der Verkündigung sind wir sehr dankbar
17-3 Wie immer war die Verkündigung von Stephan Sigg sehr gut. Die Themen die er anspricht, sind die Themen die Jugendliche interessiert.
18-3 Hm, was wollt ihr hier hören? Die Leute fühlen sich wohl. Das Signal kam erst eine Minute vor 8 - beinahe hätten wir alle aufs Dach klettern müssen. Eine Anmerkung: Es wirkt irgendwie komisch, wenn das Set ein Internetcafé sein soll, dass die Leute an den Tischen, während Stefan redet, wie eingefroren dasitzen - sie müssten irgendwas machen, tuscheln, was trinken, am PC sitzen etc...

19-3 Obwohl wir Stephan als aufgeweckten, modernen Jugendsekretär kennen, hat uns seine Kleidung an diesem Wochenende viel besser gefallen. Ihr werdet immer wie besser!!! Macht weiter so, wir freuen uns auf jeden kommenden Abend.

20-3 Wir fragten uns, wieso ausgerechnet am Freitag so viele da waren. Cool!!! Der Vortrag war für viele der beste von allen, bis jetzt. Die Musik war schon etwas besser, aber könnte echt noch besser werden. Der Typ von der Band muß sich noch ganz arg steigern!!! Es wäre schön, wenn an den jeweiligen Abenden mehr feedback von den verschiedendsten Gruppen all über Germany erwähnt werden würden.
21-3 leute aben gefunden echt gut bis intressant
22-3 bis jetzt bester Abend - Steffans Kleidung sieht sehr gut aus - Musik ist auch besser geworden (Idee: einmal einfach nur ein Instrumental spielen) - zur Kameraführung bei der Musik - ich persönlich finde es nicht so günstig durch den beleuchteten Pfeiler hindurch zu filmen, da die/der Sänger dadurch so weit weg wirkt und die Farben durch die pinkfarbene Beleuchtung unangenehm wirken - Steffans Verkündigung absolut spitze - die Idee mit dem Gesicht war absolut genial! -> weiter so

23-3 unser Haus war richtig voll trotz (oder gerade wegen) des Regens, dadurch war auch die Bar sehr gut besucht
24-3 Sehr gute Botschaft, die auch unsere kleineren Kids angesprochen hat.
25-3 Coole Soap
26-3 Wir finden Link2life super. Es hat eine grosse Gruppe Jugendlicher, welche jeden Abend besucht haben und sich bereits auf nächsten Freitag freuen. Herzlichen Dank für Euren Einsatz. Gottes Segen spüren wir jeden Abend. LG
27-3 Die Musik kommt nicht besonders gut bei den Jugendlichen an
28-3 Am Freitagabend kommen viele von den Jugendlichen erst von sonst wo nach Hause ... aber der Abend war ok.

30-3 Abend war prima, bis auf den Witz von Maria, der erzählt werden sollte, aber dann doch
nicht kam. Hab ich das alles nur falsch verstanden. Sollte oder durfte der Witz nicht erzählt werden. Ach war das witzig. Gruß Thomas

31-3 Verkündigung kam gut an, drumherum (z.B. der fehlende Witz) eher nicht.

32-3 Feedback: meist 'interessant', Moderation wird etwas bemängelt, Stefan Sigg besser als 2002

33-3 Insgesamt dieses Jahr weniger Gäste als vor zwei Jahren, aber dafür sind mehr \"Stammgäste\" dabei

34-3 war deutlich besser als das erste Wochenende - Verkündigung war klasse - Soap kommt nicht so gut an

35-3 die lieualernahle war dieses wochenende ziemlich gut!

36-3 Werner Reimann ist enttäuscht, dass \"nur\" Gemeindeglieder kommen.

37-3 Thematisch ist die Veranstaltung sehr interessant und weckt das Verlangen nach mehr. Das Rahmenprogramm kann noch verbessert werden.

38-3 der bisher an wenigsten besuchte Abend, vielleicht wegen der Pause. Was trotzdem gut

39-3 Abend ist super gelaufen und besonders das Nachprogramm ist atmosphärisch gut angekommen


41-3 Wir fanden alle das Thema sehr gut!!!

42-3 einfach nur genial, stärkstes Thema bisher, tiefgründig mit top – Inhalt

43-3 Familie Riederer zeigt Link2Life von zu Hause aus; zeitversetzt, da sie keine Satellitenschüssel haben. Sie sind noch immer begeistert. Liebe Grüße Andrea

44-3 Wir sind via Internet dabei.

45-3 Nach der langen Pause ham wir uns schon wieder auf das L2L Wochenende gefreut und es hat wieder alles prima geklappt. Unsere Gäste waren auch wieder total begeistert von unseren grünen Snacks, die unsere Angi zaubert.


1-4 Keine Technischen Probleme, Bester Besuch heute

2-4 war wie immer alles super *G* sind alle hier für nen 3. link 2 life!!!!

3-4 nach Schluß war noch eine Zeit der Stille, alle waren sehr beeindruckt

4-4 Das Thema war gut genauso wie die Andacht. Die Musik passte ab und zu niht aber sonst alles bestens weiter so.

5-4 Die Gründe, die am Anfang in dem Streifen immer laufen könnten etwas langsamer sein, so das man sie besser lesen kann.

6-4 Die Jugendliche haben es sehr interressant und ansprechend gefunden, ich konnte leider nicht die ganze Zeit dabei sein, wegen sonder Aufgaben. Macht weiter so! Echt klasse! Wünsche euch Gottes Segen! Andreas

7-4 Tja, sehr schöner Abend ;) Die Leute tummeln sich im Chat, bei den Cocktails und in der Lounge. Positiv, dass diesmal nur eine Woche dazwischen ist.

8-4 War gut! Das Interview wird von den meisten unserer Besucher als eher langweilig eingestuft.

9-4 Unsere Leute fanden es super, dass die Sänger der L2L-Band endlich auswendig gesungen haben und nicht andauernd auf ihre Noten schauten. Was man nicht alles \"auszusetzen!\" hat... Nein, L2L ist echt SUPER!!!!!

10-4 Vom Programm her war es genau das gleiche wie sonst auch! Es hat sich wohl schon bei einigen rumgesprochen was so bei uns läuft und es gefällt jedem sehr gut, selbst die konservativen Erwachsenen sind begeistert von unserer Deko und der tollen Stimmung die herrscht. Heute hatten wir ein Hoch was unsere Besucherzahl angeht, ein echter Segen! Auch die Verkündigung war sehr anprechend, auch wenn viele meinten der Vorabend sei besser gewesen, es kommt halt auch immer auf die einzelne Person an, ich persönlich fand
die Verkündigung genauso gut und ansprechend. Weiter so!

11-4 Es war ganz gemütlich bei uns und wir hatten viele junge Besucher, denen es gut gefallen hat.

12-4 Viele von uns sind direkt nach Darmstadt gefahren. Der Vortrag war sehr gut. Schön, daß Stephan die Dinge beim Namen nennt und sie einfach rüberbringt. Die Musik war schon ein wenig besser. Der Typ von der Band muß raus!!! Der kann’s nicht!!! Für viele von uns ist er echt peinlich!!!

13-4 - Programm fast so gut wie am 3. Abend - besonders der Filmausschnitt war sehr anregend - Steffans Kleidung war wieder sehr gut gewählt - obwohl ich es diesmal ein bisschen zu plastisch fand (die Kamerainblendung mit dem Scharfschützen -> auf Stephan gezielt) - bei Musik wieder durch den Pfleger gefilmt - finde ich nicht so gut-> wenn das Niveau so bleibt dann ist das super - weiter so.

14-4 Alles hat perfekt gepasst! Die Musik war gut!!!


16-4 der Sinn dieser jugendlichen auf dem couch 3 mädchen und 2 goßen sehe ich nicht wirklich Stephan macht das sehr gut nur wieder so.

17-4 Dieser Abend könnte Langzeitfolgen haben! Gut gemacht.

18-4 Es gibt immer einiges zum Darüberreden.

19-4 Unser bester Abend bisher. Alle hatten Zeit und Bock! Einige Baptisten waren dabei und haben sich sehr positiv geäußert, wollen mithelfen. Vielen Dank für euren Einsatz!

20-4 - wieder super Verkündigung- gutes Rahmenprogramm

21-4 Abend war wiederum spitzte! Gruß Thomas

22-4 Dem Großeil der Besucher gefällt die Musik nicht zu rockig für die konservativeren, zu jazzig und unmodern für die jüngeren. Allerdings kommt das Rahmenprogramm (Moderation und Soap&41; besser an als das letzte Mal.

23-4 zum Thema Musik: werden hier die Titel vom neuen "Jungen" Liederbuch verwendet?


25-4 Die Gäste fühlen sich beim Vor- und Nachprogramm sehr heimisch. Wir versuchen sie vor allem bei der Musik mit einzubinden.

26-4 Verkündigung klasse und Musik deutlich besser angekommen als Vorabende

27-4 Wir erleben, dass auch eine schlecht (in LA) organisierte aber trotzdem durchgeführt Veranstaltung von Gott gesegnet ist, woher kommen sonst die vergleichsweise vielen fremden Dauergäste.

28-4 das letzte Musikstück war besonders klasse!!

29-4 wieder ein schöner Abend

30-4 Die meisten finden's echt gut. Die Musik wird jetzt besser.

31-4 Botschaft wird extrem gut aufgenommen. Rahmen wurde besser, man merkt gewisse Veränderungen, Zeitlich besser (d.h. Interview kürzer)

32-4 Gästezahl steigt langsam wieder. Super Verlauf wieder im Nachprogramm und auch die Verkündigung war wieder toll, genau wie das bewegende Zeugnis im Interview.


34-4 Wir hatten heute viel Besuch von Jugendlichen aus einem anderen Bezirk. Dort gibt es keine Jugendgruppe. So war der Besuch bei uns ein high-light für sie (und hat die innere Verbundenheit bestärkt
Interview kurz und gut, Message war gut
wärend mal viele Gäste, echt top!!
Leider hat unser Reciever gesponnen und wir konnten die Übertragung nicht sehen, aber wir hatten trotzdem einen schönen Abend!!
war wieder alles super, außer das Rahmenprogramm...
Gutes Thema, nur leider kommt die musikalische Gestaltung in unserer Gruppe nicht sehr gut an.
schwächerer Abend, Thema nicht ganz so gut rübergebracht, wie an den bisherigen Abenden
20 Gäste meint Nicht-STA. Aber auch aus anderen Kirchen
Heute kamen die Moderatoren besser rüber. Sie waren lockerer.
Feedback


ich fand total cool und die predigt total toll!!! weiter soo!!!
Heute abend war wieder extrem gut. er kam sehr gut an.
schlechte tonqualität=(schwankungen in der lautschärke) Super rede von stefan!!!!
war alles Super, aber das Rahmenprogramm..... oh mna... gut, dass wir stefan haben und er alles wet machen kann
war alles super. Hatten nur leichte Empfangsstörungen während des Rahmenprogramms. Gingen nach nem Gebet weg!!!
das beste.. bis jetzt
es war sehr lustig und danke an link2life: ihr macht das super!!
Schön, dass Ihr den Tobi ein wenig aufgetaut habt. Fetzigere Musik als bisher. Leider schlechtere Tonmischung (wenig Klangtransparenz bei den Musikbeiträgen, schlechte Textverständlichkeit bei den Liedbeiträgen), im Interview zu viel Monolog des Gastes. Stephans Ansprache war klasse strukturiert. Danke für die kurzen Video-Sequenzen! Soap ist super! Gott mit Euch!
Sehr positive Rückmeldungen. Ich wünsche Euch, dass Gott weiterhin mit Euch ist und seine Sache kräftig fördert. Andreas
Stephan`s power war echt cool. Er ist voll abgegangen. Phenomenal!!! Der Typ von der Band muß weg. Er kann einfach nicht singen. Sorry!!! :( Das Abend lief soweit ganz gut, wir hatten leider nicht so viele Leute wie letztes Mal, aber es war ein schöner Abend. Außerdem war es mit die beste Predigt von Stephan!
tobi war mega
Stephans Worte wie immer, gut, sehr lebhaft vorgetragen, sogar unser kritischster Jugendlicher hat zugegeben, dass es ihm gefallen hat
Für uns schon fast ein echter Schweizer-Abend. Tobis Rap und Stephans Sporteineingang waren der Höhepunkt des Abends. Tiefpunkt war mal wieder Jasmis Kleidung... Aber auch sonst kam der 5. Abend bei uns sehr! gut an. Weiter so!!! Mit lieben und verschneiten Grüßen, die Oertlimatter
Verkündigung hatte etwas zu viel Aktion, Interview gut, Soap etwas aufgesetzt, ... generell für alle Abende gilt, das die Musik wohl etwas an der angegebenen Zielgruppe (unter) vorbeigeht, qualitative gut aber der Stile spricht wohl eher die Minderheit der Zielgruppe an .
Cooler Rap von Tobi!
Die Musik wird als immer ähnlich empfunden.Die Begleitung ist zu laut, der Text wird nicht immer gut verstanden. Können nicht >Lieder gesungen werden, die sich wie Ohrwürmer einprägen ?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tag</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-5</td>
<td>Der Inhalt ist sehr gut angekommen, die Musik überzeugt die Jugendlichen nicht.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-5</td>
<td>Ihr moderatorensiel lustig... Stefan du kannst total gut predigen mach weiter so!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-5</td>
<td>Jugendraum platz aus allen Nähten, sodass wir den Gemeindesaal mitnutzen müssen. Ein bisher absolutes gesegnetes L2L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-5</td>
<td>Interview hätte etwas länger sein können... Ansonsten guter Abend!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-5</td>
<td>Wir hatten bei uns die Baptistenjugend zu Gast. Sie waren von dem Programm positiv bewegt und haben sich eingebracht.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-5</td>
<td>Wir waren nur 'ne kleine Gruppe, aber wir halten durch. Thema wie immer sehr gut gemacht!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-5</td>
<td>die moderazion war spitze die rebeinlage vom tobi genial(logisch isch sie guet gsi den er isch jo en helvezier) noch par bemerkungen von den besucheren: gute stimmung / gute einleitung/ stefan cecht gut! / god is great! / bin mändndli mit em chopfanfang! (keine ahnung was diese person mit dem gemeint hat / echt gut betrifl vereinzeld stephan / bar im hintergrund vermittelt jüdiss es für adventis ol is alkhol zu trinken / die idee mit dem machen fand ich cool!(meinte diese person echt das metalmädchen das das publikum selber machen durften? den wir von bürgeln haben jeden abend ein mitgipsel für die leute gemacht oder besorgt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-5</td>
<td>Sehr gute Message! Besonders gut: Hau den Lukas</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-5</td>
<td>war ok., aber hätte besser sein können...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-5</td>
<td>Gruppe bestehend aus älteren Gemeindegliedern. ...sind niedergeschlagen, dass sie keine Besucher haben...</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-5</td>
<td>Die Verkündigung war sehr anschaulich und gut verständlich, Evangelium pur! Super! Weiter so!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-5</td>
<td>Klasse gestaltet, aber DER Moderator ist nicht dafür geschaffen, Maria Lehmann macht das klasse und hat eine lockere Art, aber ER eben nicht!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-5</td>
<td>Es kommen auch neue Gäste, schön ist, dass sich doch ein kleiner Kern gebildet hat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-5</td>
<td>Abend war spitze!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-5</td>
<td>Ein neuer Gast (14) schrieb: &quot;Ich fand es voll cool!&quot; Ein anderer Gast schrieb: &quot;Die Band sollte mal erneuert werden (nur Sänger, die singen nicht so gut).&quot; Sonst kam folgendes Feedback: - Die Andacht hat mich sehr angeprochen. - Ich fand die Andacht echt ansprechend. Die Serie war wie immer spitze!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-5</td>
<td>Die Illustration mit dem &quot;Hau den Lukas!&quot; war klasse!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-5</td>
<td>Die Musik kommt einstimmig nicht an!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-5</td>
<td>auch unplugged ist die Band gut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-5</td>
<td>Wir waren überwältigt von dem Besucheransturm!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-5</td>
<td>Sprecher kommt an. Musik nicht.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-5</td>
<td>Stephans Ansprachen sind durchweg klasse!Der heutige Beitrag hat uns aber ganz besonders begeistert! Die &quot;Hau-den-Lukas!&quot;-Einlage war vortrefflich!</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Sängerin soll ein bisschen natürlicher singen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-6</td>
<td>Interview ging so, Soap war gut, Message gut, Musik naja :(</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Es war eine schöne Stimmung unter den Teilnehmer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Stephan in Hochform, war klasse. Tobi wieder ein wenig tiefgekühlt, Interview deutlich besser als gestern (mehr Frage/Antwort), Jasmin kam super rüber, Soap genial, Filmszene ohne Quellen-/Copyrightangabe und nicht der Stil unserer Teenies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>- war ein schöner Abend - alles supi - Kameraführung top! - Tobi wirkte an der Internetmoderation nicht so gut, ich empfand seine Kollegin gestern am PC besser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6</td>
<td>Das Thema hat gut angesprochen. Stephan hat's voll auf den Punkt gebracht. War gut!!! Die Musik: naja: könnte besser sein!!! Die Moderatoren waren etwas lockerer drauf!!! Tobs könnte etwas deutilicher reden!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-6</td>
<td>Der Abend lief einfach super, obwohl wir dieses Mal wieder in unserer 2. Location Unterliederbach waren, waren wir 41 Leute. Ein echter Rekord und das obwohl es so weit außerhalb liegt. Es hat sich echt rumgesprochen, wirklich schön. Das Thema fand ich persönlich toll, denn ich denke es gibt so viele Leute die mit Sex und Liebesbestätigungssuche ein echtes Problem haben, es aber nicht aussprechen können. Manche unserer jüngeren hat es peinlich berührt, aber wir haben auch versucht auf sie einzugehen und einfach auch drüber zu reden. Bei den Erwachsenen die ihre Kids mit gebracht haben, kam es etwas komisch an für die Kids, denn diese konnten dann sicherlich nicht ganz so mitreden, allerdings hat sich keiner beschwert und das Thema war ja bereits im Vorraus bekannt... So viel dazu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-6</td>
<td>Also wir haben das Band vom fünften abend geschaut...und uns königlich amüsiert über den &quot;Hau den Lukas!!&quot;...den haben wir dann noch einmal zurückgespielt. Wir werden (leider) die restlichen Abende zeitversetzt schauen, da wir die Schüssel nicht mehr hinkriegen und es so schwierig und aufwändig ist hier die Techniker wieder zu bemühen, natürlich Tim und Martin, die schon damit auch schon abgeplagt hatten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-6</td>
<td>Am Sabbatabend ist der Besuch nicht so wie am Freitag. Aber dieses Mal war der &quot;Saal&quot; trotzdem gut gefüllt. Das Thema war nicht schlecht gemacht, aber das drum her rum war nicht sonderlich gut (Meinung der fremden Jugendlichen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-6</td>
<td>Interview wäre besser mit älteren gewesen... Gute Botschaft!! Bei Liedern ist der Gesang etwas zu leise abgemischt, so dass man den Text nur schwer versteht.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-6</td>
<td>Es werden auch jugendliche angesprochen, welche sonst alles was mit Religion zu tun hat bemühend finden. Wir freuen uns bereits auf das nächste L2L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-6</td>
<td>Die Musik der letzten 2-3 Abende war meiner Meinung nach für Teenager bzw. nicht adv. Jugendliche nicht einprägsam genug (Texte zu schwer nachvollziehbar, Melodie nicht so toll etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-6</td>
<td>Der Abend war für uns enttäuschend. Das Programm war Klasse. Leider haben sich einige Gäste nicht wieder gemeldet, trotz Einladung. Wir hatten auch sehr winterliches Wetter. Das hält aber Jugendliche nicht ab, wenn sich wollen. Wir bleiben trotzdem dran!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-6</td>
<td>ein paar Querelen mit unseren Leuten vor Ort (PC's haben eine ungeheure Anziehungskraft), aber aus Darmstadt die gewohnte Qualität</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-6</td>
<td>War ein guter Abend, freuen uns schon auf die letzten beiden Abende.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-6</td>
<td>moderazion von tobi genial aber die nicht geplante sprueche der &quot;lacheanfal &quot;war genial / der ausschneid vom jesus film kam 1 person nicht gut an / ein pesucher schrieb bei bemerkung super hin / der anfang war genial die fehler wo den moderatoren duo unterlaufen sin fand ein kartenausführer glat / da stefan het vol gas gähl! schrieb eine besucherin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-6</td>
<td>Musik war besonders gut! Tobias sollte es allerdings lieber lassen (war am 5.Abend oder?). Das Interview wirkte gestellt. Message kam aber gut rüber.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-6</td>
<td>Musik soll peppiger und nicht so steif rüberkommen!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-6</td>
<td>spitze, Tipps für den Umgang mit Sex einwandfrei nahe gebracht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-6</td>
<td>War sehr gut angekommen! Gott sei mit euch Andreas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-6</td>
<td>Wir sind furchtbar traurig, dass unsere Bilder nicht gezeigt wurden. Sehr traurig, ich hoffe ihr holt das nächstes mal nach, sonst sind wir noch trauriger. aber dann so richtig traurig. Ach ja und der Rest eigentlich nix neues Stephan kam sehr gut an. Die Musik besser gesagt der</td>
</tr>
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487
Sänger sollte ausgetauscht werden. und die Soaplassen wir das mal. Tobi wird immer besser langsam wird das ja noch richtig gut und sein Rap kam auch ganz gut an.

23-6 Hatten dieses mal mehr Leute zu Besuch, als sonst! Obs am Thema lag? *grins*!! Thema war klasse gestaltet. Stephan, du hast echt drauf!!

24-6 Sabbats kommen immer mehr Gäste. Die Sendung haben sich 6 Gäste ganz angeschaust. Die anderen gucken nur mal und ziehen sich dann zurück. Das Ritual ist wie gehabt. Wir hoffen ein wenig Samen zu streuen und eine Vorstellung für eine positive Lebensweise zu geben. Für die Adventis ist die Sendung sehr gut, alle (bis auf die Ordner, die sich abwechseln) schauen zu. An der Theke haben wir einen Fernseher, so dass die Leute am Getränkestand mit schauen können.


26-6 Gute Gespräche. --> Ansprechperson gute Idee!

27-6 Unseren Gästen hat es gefallen

28-6 eine Person fragte nach Taufe

29-6 Ein segen Gottes!!!

30-6 Endlich, wir haben schon geglaubt, Tobias erwacht nie aus seinem "Schlafl" und haben es ganz, ganz toll gefunden, endlich den echten Tobi zu sehen!! Auch Stephan ist bei uns, mit seiner offenen Art über dieses "heikle" Thema zu sprechen, sehr gut angekommen. Wir wünschen Euch für das letzte Wochenende alles Gute, viel Freude und weiterhin Gottes Sege

31-6 Feedback-Karten: - Die Predigt war toll! - Die Andacht war sehr interessant. Ihr seid spitze - macht weiter. - Stefan Sigg hat das Thema super gemacht. - Ich fand das Thema echt toll und interessant. - Super, daß Ihr Euch auch an dieses schwierige, aber brandaktuelle Thema wagt !


34-6 Alle geben sich große Mühe um sich an die Musik zu gewöhnen, aber es will nicht gelingen. Wir übernachten jedes L2L Wochenende in der Gemeinde. Es wurde dafür sogar extra eine Dusche in der Gemeinde installiert. Wir erleben wie unsere Gruppe immer mehr zusammen findet und das letzte Wochenende wollen wir nutzen um eine Vision als Gruppe mit Gott und für Gottes Sache zu entwickeln. Die Gemeinde steht als Gebetskraftwerk hinter den Jugendlichen. Auch wenn uns die Musik nicht gefällt ist L2L sehr segensreich für unsere Gruppe. Weiter so!!!

35-6 unplugged die Zweite; wann wird es wieder elektrisch?

36-6 ein besonders emotionaler Stephan der aber eine klare Botschaft hatte

37-6 Sehr viele Leute da

38-6 Wie immer sie Musik!!! Man versucht sich an die Musik zu gewöhnen. Positiv!!!!!!!!!!! Wir übernachten alle Wochenenden in der Gemeinde. Es wurde extra eine Dusche in der Gemeinde eingerichtet. Die ganze Aktion führt unsere Jugend mehr zusammen. Das letzte Wochenende wir auch zur Planung der Zukunft genutzt. Also unter dem Strich - sehr gute Sache, weiter so, zu meckern gibt es immer etwas. Gruß, Dittmar

39-6 Musik kommt nicht immer bei den jungen Leuten an.


1-7 hat alles super geklappt und fettes danke für meine geburtstags grüße und das kleine ständchen! hat mich echt gefreut!!!!!

3-7 gut gewähltes thema!


5-7 wir hatten besuch aus Frankfurt zwei frauen die nicht adventisten sind waren bei uns

6-7 Steffans Message hat mir im zweiten Teil sehr gut gefallen, wo es um den Vietnamkrieg ging.

7-7 Die Lieder fand ich heute nicht so gut, wobei die Band aber supi war. Das Instrumental hat mir sehr gut gefallen, kann man ruhig noch ausbauen. Alles in allem war der Abend gut. Macht weiter so. Gottes Segen, Johannes

8-7 Interview-Clip war klasse

9-7 Jugendliche die richtig mitwirken sind wir vielleicht 20-25, der Rest sind alles Leute, die sich mal blicken lassen der zum Teil ganz Fremde. liebe Grüsse aus Berlin

10-7 Die Musik??? Bitte nächstes Mal etwas weniger künstlerischen Anspruch und mehr Unterhaltung für unsere Jugendlichen.

11-7 Heute wars sehr gut besucht und die Stimmung war echt gut!

12-7 Moderation ansprechend, Message sehr gut

13-7 Jo, die Gäste erscheinen nicht so zahlreich, dafür aber sind die Jugendlichen am Rande der Jugendgruppe und der Gemeinde jeden Abend gut vertreten! In eigener Sache zum letzten Feedback: Es hat sich in unserer Jugend einiges getan. Haben diese Woche den Grundstein für eine JugendKern-Minigruppe gelegt, in der wir uns gegenseitig über unseren Alltag und die Jugend austauschen und reden möchten. Nächste Woche geht's weiter, deshalb ist so stark anhören nicht mehr zu denken. Danke für Beten!

14-7 Von der Tendenz her - vielleicht zu stark zu stark auf die Gesellschaft "gewetzt"

15-7 Wir fanden es ganz toll, dass die Lieder der L2L-Band nun nur noch deutsche Texte haben. So versteht auch jeder die Botschaft.


17-7 - sehr gute Verkündigung- super Rahmenprogramm

18-7 Von den Gästen nahmen schauten sich 5 die Sendung an. Die anderen nahmen zum Teil am Vorprogramm teil. Die Sendung wurde gut angenommen.

19-7 Stephan ist einfach spitze. Der Typ von der Band: das Peinlichste, was es nur gibt!!!


1-8 L2L war suuuuppperrrr!!!!! Danke an das L2L team das alles statt finden konnte!!!!

2-8 War wieder ein sehr schöner Abend, einer der besten.

3-8 Schade, dass es schon aus ist.

4-8 So, trotz Taufe am Nachmittag, war es heute Abend gut besucht und es hat auch mit den Vorbereitungen geklappt, wenn auch später, weil die Räumlichkeiten belegt waren. Eigentlich hätten wir heute einjähriges Bestehen unseres JugendCafés Fridays "at" Seven in Essen gehabt, aber es war zuviel los, so dass wir es vielleicht doch noch Silvester oder spätestens im Januar nachholen.

5-8 7. und 8. Abend waren inhaltlich die stärksten. Alles hat ein Ende...

6-8 Am Schluss habe ich konkrete Reaktionen zum Gesamtprogramm erfragt:

VERKUNDIGUNG - durchweg spitze - SOAP - gemischt, einige fanden es echt cool, andere sagten, es hätte nichts gefehlt, wenn sie gefehlt hätte (ca 50/50) - MUSIK - verhalten, Band - gut, Stimmen - gemischt, Musikstil - etwas mehr Fetziges hat gefehlt. Die Variation vor 2 Jahren war größer - INSGESAMT: Genial, DANK AN ALLE BETEILIGTEN!!!!!

7-8 mehr action hätte man schluss machen müssen...

8-8 Der Abschlussabend habt allen gut gefallen.

9-8 Die deutschen Musiktexte wurden sehr positiv empfunden.

zustimmen (Es gibt einen Gott, ich bin Christ ...&). Die letzte Aussage lautete: "Ich möchte mich taufen lassen." Das haben 7 von 9 Teens angekreuzt - also vermutlich alle Teens mit adv. Hintergrund (was toll ist) und mindestens 1 Teenager ohne adv. Hintergrund (was noch toller ist). Herzliche Grüße und vielen Dank. Michael

11-8 Auch an diesem abend kein Empfang über LNB deshalb haben wir es uns über PC angeschaut. Bild war über die Grobbildleinwand zwar schlecht aber wir konnten alles sehr gut verstehen. Allgemein ein groses Lob an die Veranstalter es war sehr gelungen und wir hoffen schon (trotz unserer schlechten Besucherzahlen) auf ein nächstes mal!!! Gruß Adventjugend Neuburg

12-8 Insgesamt waren es 8 richtig gute Abende, sowohl was von Euch aus Darmstadt kam, als auch wie es bei uns vor Ort lief (nicht immer reibungslos, aber das gehört halt dazu). Sind traurig, dass es vorbei ist und freuen uns auf ein nächstes Mal!


14-8 Der Link2Life Abschluss von eurer Seite war echt wunderschön und auch sehr persönlich. Es ist super gut angekommen und auch an Stephan noch mal ein großes Kompliment er war einfach klasse und seine Message kam wirklich rüber! Vielen Dank an euch & Gottes Segen!

15-8 Echt SUPER, bei uns ist L2L noch nicht zu Ende! Wir freuen uns auf den 11.12. in Zürich!!!!

16-8 Wir hatten immer einen serh guten Empfang. Am letzten Abend waren noch einmal viele Gäste aus anderen Kirchen.

17-8 viele fondens schade dass es schon der letzte tag war

18-8 Zum Schluss noch einmal ein guter Abend für uns. Es sind 2 neue Gäste gekommen. Der Abend hat den Nerv der Besucher getroffen. Danke!

19-8 - link2life war klasse - hoffentlich gibt es ein link2life 2006 - weiter so!!!

20-8 Dies war wirklich eine gelungene Sache. Ein grosses Kompliment an die Musiker!

21-8 Ein guter Abschluß der Sendung. Die Kalender waren eine gute Erinnerung. 4 Gäste und die Adventjugend schauten sich die Sendung an, die anderen hatten wenigstens etwas Kontakt mit uns und das war gut so. So war die Sendung mal ein Anlass, die eher soziale Betreuung im Jugendclub mal mit evangelistischen Akzenten zu bereichern.

22-8 Ein krönender Abschluss! Die kreativ-anschaulichen Ansprachen von Stephan haben uns auch dieses Mal wieder fasziniert. Toll, wie er die jungen Leute abzuholen und anzusprechen vermag. Auch wir ältere Jugendliche fühlten uns sehr angesprochen und motiviert. Mancherlei des Vorprogramms war uns zwar etwas befremdlich (bsp. die Soap), so dass wir zuweilen arg auf dem Schlauch standen (sind wir schon so alt?); aber allein schon die Ansprachen haben die Teilnahme an L2L auch dieses Jahr wieder gerechtfertigt. Ein herzliches Dankeschön an das ganze Team; kaum auszudenken, welch Arbeit und Identifikation in solch einem professionell gestalteten Projekt steckt. Insbesondere auch ein respektzollender Dank an Stephan für all die mutmachenden christozentrischen Themen. Gott hat ihm wirklich eine große Gabe gegeben! Das lässt einen fröhlich und optimistisch stimmen für die Zukunft ungeinter Jugendlichen, also auch unserer Gemeinden in Deutschland. Gott mag die Arbeit segnen! Einen lieben nächtlichen Gruß aus Konstanz, Marc Diez

23-8 Super Verkündigung!!!!! Schade, dass es vorbei ist... Hoffen auf Fortsetzung!! Liebe Grüße aus Nürnberg!!

24-8 Stephan ist klasse!!! Verkündigung hat total angesprochen!!! Furchtbar schade, daß es der letzte Abend war!!! Musik war im großen und ganzen echt nicht das Beste!!!

25-8 Insgesamt eine sehr gelungene Veranstaltung, die besonders uns als "neue" Jugendgruppe fester zusammengebracht hat.
**APPENDIX P**

**QUESTIONNAIRES LINK2LIFE 2002 & 2004**

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**Link2Life Fragebogen zur Auswertung - (revidierte Ausgabe)**

bitte umgehend nach Abschluss (ab 08.12.2002) ausfüllen und abschicken

---

**Name der Jugendgruppe / Gemeinde:**

---

**Vereinigung:**

---

1. **Unsere Informationen zu Link2Life haben wir hauptsächlich über diese Quelle erhalten**
   a. Internet
   b. Newsletter
   c. Vereinigung

2. **Die Programmgestaltung entsprach unseren Vorstellungen**
   (1 = gar nicht, 2 = kaum, 3 = keine Meinung, 4 = meistens, 5 = sehr)

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3. **Die Verkündigung entsprach unseren Vorstellungen**
   (1 = gar nicht, 2 = kaum, 3 = keine Meinung, 4 = meistens, 5 = sehr)

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4. **Der Durchschnittsbesuch von nichtadventistischen Jugendlichen/Gästen war - verglichen mit unseren Erwartungen -**
   (1 = viel geringer, 2 = etwas geringer, 3 = ungefähr gleich, 4 = höher, 5 = viel höher)

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5. **Wir würden anderen Jugendgruppen / Gemeinden empfehlen, an einer solchen NET-Evangelisation wieder teilzunehmen.**
   a. Ja
   b. Nein
   c. Bedingt

6. **Link2Life hat sich in verschiedenen Bereichen unserer Gemeinde ausgewirkt, und zwar: Verschlechterung (1) - keine Veränderung (2) - Verbesserung (3)**
   a. Verbundenheit mit der Gemeinde allgemein
   b. Verbundenheit untereinander
   c. Identität mit der STA
   d. Verhältnis zu Evangelisation heute in Deutschland
   e. Persönliches Engagement in der Mission
   f. Geistlicher Aufbruch in der Jugendgruppe

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7. **Wir haben "Gäste" in unseren Jugendgruppen (bzw. Bibel-, Hauskreisen - und zwar:**
   a. insgesamt: ...........(sollte die Summe aus b und c sein)
   b. die im wesentlichen durch Link2Life da sind
      i. Nicht-STA-Jugendliche: ........
      ii. ungetaufte STA-Jugendliche: ........
   c. die auch schon vor Link2Life teilnahmen
      i. Nicht-STA-Jugendliche: ........
      ii. ungetaufte STA-Jugendliche: ........

8. **Wir haben "Gäste" in unseren Gottesdiensten, und zwar:**
   a. insgesamt: ...........(sollte die Summe aus b und c sein)
   b. die im wesentlichen durch Link2Life da sind
      i. Nicht-STA-Jugendliche: ........
      ii. ungetaufte STA-Jugendliche: ........
   c. die auch schon vor Link2Life teilnahmen
      i. Nicht-STA-Jugendliche: ........
      ii. ungetaufte STA-Jugendliche: ........

9. **Wir haben Leute, die Bibelstunden bekommen, und zwar:**
   a. insgesamt: ...........(sollte die Summe aus b und c sein)
   b. die im wesentlichen durch Link2Life da sind
      i. Nicht-STA-Jugendliche: ........
      ii. ungetaufte STA-Jugendliche: ........
   c. die auch schon vor Link2Life teilnahmen
iii. Nicht-STA-Jugendliche: .........
iv. ungetaufte STA-Jugendliche: .........

10. Wir haben durch Link2Life neue Kontakte zu Menschen knüpfen können. Wir kennen auch deren Anschrift oder Telefonnummer, um sie zu späteren Anlässen wieder einzuladen zu können.
   Anzahl: ........

   a. Nein
   b. Ja, nämlich (Anzahl): ........

12. Zur Werbung:
   a. Wir haben folgende Werbemittel eingesetzt (bitte Stückzahl angeben):
      1. Zeitungsinsertat: ..............
      2. Zeitungsbeilage: ..............
      3. Grossplakat / Banner ..............
      4. Andere Plakate ..............
      5. Einladungen im Brief ..............
      6. Postwurfsendung ..............
      7. Internet / E-Mail ..............
      8. Radio / TV (wie oft wurden Spots gesendet?) ..............
      9. Kino-Werbung ..............

   b. Aus unserer Kenntnis sind folgende Anzahl von Menschen auf Grund folgender Werbemittel gekommen (bitte ca. Anzahl eintragen):
      1. Zeitungsinsertat: ..............
      2. Zeitungsbeilage: ..............
      3. Grossplakat / Banner ..............
      4. Andere Plakate ..............
      5. Einladungen im Brief ..............
      6. Postwurfsendung ..............
      7. Internet / E-Mail ..............
      8. Radio / TV ..............
      9. Kino-Werbung ..............
     10. Freunde ..............


Ort, Datum

Unterschrift des Verantwortlichen des Austragungsortes

Danke für Eure Mithilfe!

Bitte unmittelbar nach Link2Life absenden, d.h. noch vor Weihnachten 2002.

Wann auf manche die Fragen noch nicht geantwortet werden kann, weil z.B. noch keine Heuskreise mit Jugendlichen / Gästen stattgefunden haben - bitte dennoch umgehend den Fragebogen abschicken an:

Gemeinschaft der STA · Adventjugend
z. H. Martin Knoll
Fischerstraße 19 / 30167 Hannover
oder
Fax: (0511) 971 77 33
oder E-Mail
martin.knoll@adventjugend.de
Link2Life 2004
Deutsch-Schweizerische Vereinigung
Norddeutscher Verband
Süddeutscher Verband
Auswertung - 09 / 2005

Jugendgruppe / Gemeinde / Vereinigung:

Ansprechpartner:

(bein Fragen mit einem • sind Mehrfachnennungen möglich)

Vor Link2Life 2004:

1. Unsere Informationen zu Link2Life 2004 haben wir hauptsächlich über diese Quelle erhalten *
   O Internet   O Newsletter   O Vereinigung

2. Die Internetpräsens hat das Anliegen der Evangelisation unterstützt
   O sehr   O meistens   O kaum   O nicht   O siehe Anmerkungen

3. Die 21 Newsletter haben die nützigen Informationen vermittelt
   O sehr   O meistens   O kaum   O nicht   O siehe Anmerkungen

4. Unsere Vereinigung hat uns insgesamt bei Link2Life 2004 ausreichend motiviert und unterstützt
   O sehr   O meistens   O kaum   O nicht   O siehe Anmerkungen

5. Wir haben die L2L Gebetskarten eingesetzt und empfinden sie als wichtiges Element für L2L
   O sehr   O meistens   O kaum   O nicht   O siehe Anmerkungen

6. In der Vorbereitungstags haben Gespräche bzw. Bil impressions
   O regelmäßig   O meistens   O kaum   O nicht   O siehe Anmerkungen

7. Folgende Werbemittel haben wir schwerpunktmäßig
   O Plakate   O Zeitungssektion   O Persönliche Einladung per Brief
   O Internet   O Email   O Kinowerbung   O Flyer

8. Im Wesentlichen waren folgende Werbemittel Ursache, dass Gäste kamen *
   O Plakate   O Zeitungssektion   O Persönliche Einladung per Brief
   O Internet   O Email   O Kinowerbung   O Flyer
   O Persönliche Einladung von Bekannten bzw. Freunden

Während Link2Life 2004:

9. Das Programm entsprach insgesamt unseren Vorstellungen
   O sehr   O meistens   O kaum   O nicht   O siehe Anmerkungen

10. Die Art der Verkündigung entsprach unseren Vorstellungen
    O sehr   O meistens   O kaum   O nicht   O siehe Anmerkungen
11. Die Inhalte der Verkündigung entsprach unseren Vorstellungen
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

12. Die Inhalte der Verkündigung waren Thema in den Nachgesprächen
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

13. Die Musik hat das Gesamtanliegen der Abende unterstützt
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

14. Die Qualität der Musik war aus unserer Sicht überzeugend (hier ist nicht der Musikstil gemeint!)
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

15. Durch die Bühnengestaltung wurde dem Anliegen der Abende entsprochen
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

16. Alle Programmenteile waren optisch durch die Art der Übertragung gut zu sehen
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

17. Die akustische Übertragung war störungsfrei und qualitativ gut
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

18. Die Inhalte der Soap (Anspiele) haben das Thema des Abends gut vorbereitet
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

19. Die Darsteller der Soap haben die Sache gut dargestellt
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

20. Die Interviews im Vorprogramm waren sinnvoll
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

21. Die Moderatoren haben gut durch das Programm geführt
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

22. Die Moderatoren waren der Zielgruppe entsprechend ausgewählt
O sehr  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

23. Der Durchschnittsbesuch von nicht-STA-Jugendlichen / Gassen war verglichen mit unseren Erwartungen
O vielhöher  O höher  O gleich  O etwas geringer  O enttäuschend

24. Der Besuch von ehemaligen STA-Jugendlichen war verglichen mit unseren Erwartungen
O vielhöher  O höher  O gleich  O etwas geringer  O enttäuschend

Nach Link2Life 2004:

25. Wir haben durch Link2Life neue Kontakte zu Menschen knüpfen können
O ja  ca. ...... zu Personen  O nein  O siehe Anmerkungen

26. Wegen Link2Life haben sich Jugendliche / Gemeindeglieder von uns getrennt
O nein  O ja - nämlich ......Personen, weil:  O siehe Anmerkungen

27. Seit Link2Life haben wir Gäste in unserer Jugendsstunde bzw. Hauskreis bzw. Bibelkreis
O immer  O meistens  O kaum  O nicht  O siehe Anmerkungen

28. Wir haben „Gaste' in unseren
O Gemeindegottesdiensten, etwa ...... Personen  O Jugendgottesdiensten, etwa ...... Personen
Davon sind ca........... Personen ehemalige STA-Jugendliche

29. Durch Link2Life bekamen Jugendliche Bibelstunden, die sich wahrscheinlich auch taufen lassen werden
O ca.............. Personen

30. Durch Link2Life 2004 hatten wir (stehen zurzeit fest) ............... Taufentscheidungen

Seite 2 von 3
31. Durch Link2Life hat sich folgendes spürbar verbessert *
☐ Verbundenheit untereinander ☐ Verbundenheit mit der Gemeinde
☐ Identität mit der STA-Kirche ☐ Personliches Engagement in der Mission
☐ siehe Anmerkungen

32. Durch Link2Life gab es in den Bereichen (Frage 31)
☐ keine Veränderungen ☐ Verschlechterungen, weil: ☐ siehe Anmerkungen

33. Durch Link2Life gab es in unserer Jugendgruppe Veränderungen
☐ nein
☐ Verbesserungen, wie folgt: ☐ siehe Anmerkungen
☐ Verschlechterungen, weil: ☐ siehe Anmerkungen
☐ Prozesse sind in Gang gekommen ... ☐ siehe Anmerkungen
☐ Gründung von Haus- bzw. Bibelkreisen ... ☐ siehe Anmerkungen

34. Sollte Link2Life aus eurer Sicht fortgesetzt werden
☐ ja ☐ nein Wenn ja, wann ☐ 2007 ☐ 2008 ☐ 2009

Ausblick Link2Life:

Im Blick auf zukünftige Link2Life - Evangelisationen sind aus unserer Sicht folgende Gedanken und Ideen wichtig:

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141 SDV-Mrh Mainz/Wiesbaden /Idstein
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APPENDIX R
MAIN MATERIAL AND ADVERTISEMENT FOR LOCAL VENUES

Link2Life 2002 & 2004 Folder for Local Venues

Link2Life 2002 & 2004 VIP Prayer “Creditcard”

Link2Life 2002 Flyer

Poster Intern 1 – Evangelism Info
12-6 month before the event
Ihm zu M um
Erlebe ein interaktives Event mit Musik, Interviews, Videoclips und einer ganz persönlichen Message!
Adventhaus
Grindelberg 15 • Hamburg
> 19.30 Uhr

[Eintritt frei!]

Poster Intern 2 – Still some work to do
6-2 month before the event

Link2Life 2004 Flyer - Front

Poster Intern 3 – Are you Ready?
2-0 month before the event

Link2Life 2004 Flyer - Back
FR 03. Dez. 7. Abend: Enjoy it! — Spaß muss sein! Gott ist gegen Spaß und Jesus hat nie gelernt. Es gibt Lieder, die verkörpern das — nicht nur vor etwa — Erstuga langerzeit!?” Keine Angst! Der billigen des Lebens und der Sterblichen will, dass du deine Leben genießen, aber auch verantworten kannst.

Poster Intern 1 – Evangelism Info/Applic.

Poster Intern 2 – It starts soon!

Link2Life 2002 – Advertisement in Public
Link2Life 2004 – Public Poster

**trust**

2004 nach Christus und Du kennst IHN nicht...?

DAS INTERAKTIVE EVENT FÜR JUNGE LEUTE VIA SATELLIT

Message Musik

Interviews + Videoclips
Freundschaft
Chat

LIVE AUS DARMSTADT:
29. / 30. Oktober 2004
12. / 13. November 2004
03. / 04. Dezember 2004

Live-Übertragung:
>>> 19.30 Uhr
Adventgemeinde
Oerlikon
Gubelstrasse 23
8050 Oerlikon
Bahnhaltestelle Oerlikon, 5 Minuten / Plan E1, Sgr. "Station Oerlikon"

Mehr Infos im Netz unter **www.link2life.net**
APPENDIXS

FEW HviPRESSIONS FROM SOME LOCAL VENUES IN SWITZERLAND

504
1. Abend:
I'm Olive! -
Information bedeutet Leben

2. Abend:
Be a Star! --
Sternen gehört der Himmel!
5. Abend:
Self made man — Ausstieg führt zum Auftieg!
Abend: 4
Open end –
Weil sich dein Leben lohnt!

Abend: 5
Enjoy it! –
Pure Lebensfreude!

Abend: 6
Weil ich dein Leben lohnt!


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526


Morgan-Cole, Trudy J. “A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventist Youth Ministry.” In *Getting It Right*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Youth Department, 30-34. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005.


White, Ellen G. *Education.* Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952.


Wilcher, Scott. *The Orphaned Generation: The Father’s Heart for Connecting Youth and Young Adults to Your Church*. Chesapeake, VA: The Upstream Project, 2010.


VITA

Name/Address: Stephan Sigg
              Bergfeldweg 3B
              5600 Lenzburg
              Switzerland

Date of birth: February 12, 1966
              Married, two children (Selina, 1991; Simeon, 1992)

Education:

2003-2013   D.Min. in Youth Ministry
            Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan

1992-1993   M.A. in Religion
            Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England

1991-1992   Theological Seminary Marienhöhe
            Darmstadt, Germany (today Friedensau Adv. Univ.)

1988-1991   Theologisches Seminar Bogenhofen
            St. Peter am Hart, Austria

Professional Experience:

2010-present Youth Ministries Director
                 Euro-Africa Division, Bern

2007-2010   Lecturer for Practical Theology and Religious Education
            Friedensau Adventist University, Germany

1997-2007   Youth Director
            Swiss-German Conference, Switzerland

1994-1997   Pastor in Basel, Switzerland

1986-1988   Student of Architecture
            Architects: Bachmann, Schibli, Zerkiebel; Aarau

1983-1986   Apprenticeship as Carpenter
            Schwammberger AG, Aarau