

Youth Report

A generation of kids are being raised in a Christianity devoid of Christ. They lack the very foundation to which their faith should be built upon. They don't know the most critical story of the Bible: who Christ is for them, and who they are in Christ. And sadly, without being rooted in the centrality of the gospel, our teens don't have the gospel glasses to rightly interpret life; they are ill-equipped to deal honestly with sin, and don't understand how desperately they need Jesus.

Youth ministries too often exert more energy trying to be trendy and fun than faithfully teaching Christ. And the teaching that does take place is usually topically-driven and moralistic in content. From my observation, teaching that encourages our teens to live rightly is satisfactory for many parents (who seem to care more about their children liking the program and having friends there – so they stay on a “good path” – than what is actually being taught).

What we as parents and the church too often fail to recognize is how the very teaching we believe is necessary for shaping “good” kids, actually drives them away from Jesus. Law-driven content actually leads teens to view their own morality as the basis for their right standing with God. By following the rules, trying to love others, going to church, reading their Bibles and avoiding “bad behavior,” students view themselves as “good.”

The more they adhere to the list of do's and don'ts the better and better, and stronger and stronger a Christian they think they become. So instead of teens growing in awareness of their need for a Savior, and seeing His strength where they are weak, they boast in their own performance.

These students seem to have the attitude that Jesus is lucky to have them on His team. But what these Pharisaical teens don't see is that living the Christian life is not about getting better and better, but rather becoming more and more dependent on Christ.

To live dependently comes from intimately knowing our sin and need – and that is a message our kids seldom hear.

In the minds of most kids, sin is a bad thing and their comprehension of it stops at that. In reality, truly seeing the ugliness of our sin makes what Jesus has done for us through His life and death even more amazing; it leads us into profound worship and deeper relationship with Him.

We need to give our teens the eyes to see their sin rightly.

They are loved immeasurably because of what Jesus did for them. And there's nothing they can do, good or contemptible, to change that fact.

When teens know how great Jesus' love for them is anyway (despite their sinfulness), something happens on a heart level: they want to live in a way that is pleasing and glorifying to God. This means that we as parents and the church don't need to preach more law to our kids, but give them Jesus. He is the way, and the truth, and the life they need to hear again and again and again. And so do we.

Respectfully submitted,
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