

Are You The 99% - Or The 8%

(G. Wass 11/27/11)

Gleaned from "Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church" by Kenda Creasy Dean

National Study of Youth and Religion (2002-2005)

1. Most American teenagers have a positive view of religion but otherwise don't give it much thought.
2. Most U.S. teenagers mirror their parents religious faith.
3. Teenagers lack a theological language with which to express their faith or interpret their experiences of the world.
4. A minority of American teenagers –but a significant minority- say religious faith is important, and that it makes a difference in their lives. These teenagers are doing better in life on a number of scales, compared to less religious peers.

8% can be described as "highly devoted"

- They attend religious services weekly
- They feel very close to God
- They participate in a religious youth group
- They read Scripture
- They pray frequently
- They say faith is very important in their lives

5. Many teenagers enact and espouse a religious outlook that is distinct from traditional teachings of most world religions – an outlook called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

1. A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth.
2. God want 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 is not involved in my life except when I need God to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Contrast Moralistic Therapeutic Deism with Biblical Christianity

<u>Moralistic Therapeutic Deism</u>	<u>Biblical Christianity</u>
A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth.	God exists who created all things and is sovereign over all
God want people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.	God wants people to love Him with all their hearts, and soul, and mind
The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.	The chief end of man is to glorify God and fully enjoy Him forever
God is not involved in my life except when I need God to resolve a problem.	God should be a part of my everyday life
Good people go to heaven when they die.	There is no other name among heaven by which we must be saved

Four Common Threads Found among Youth whose Faith made a difference

1. A Creed To Believe In

The Study found that youth whose faith made a difference in their lives had...

- Clear understanding of beliefs
- Able to articulate them

Matthew 7:24-27 - Core beliefs built on rock of God's Word

- will carry you through storms of life
- and attacks on your faith

2 Timothy 3:12-17 - Profitable for

- Doctrine
 - Our faith is in objective truth about God & Christ
 - Don't be afraid of this word
 - Sound doctrine provides the foundation of belief
- Reproof
 - Stop what you are doing
- Correction
 - And change direction
- Training in righteousness
 - And here is the way to go
 - God's Word is very practical, and guides us in everyday living
 - 1 Peter 3:10

Jeremiah 15:16

2. A Call To Live Out

The Study found that youth whose faith made a difference in their lives had...

- Something higher than self
- Contrast Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: What's in it for me

2 Timothy 1:9-11 - A holy calling

- According to grace, not works
- For His purpose
- Life and immortality through the Gospel

Philippians 3:13-14

- A holy ambition for God

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 – A call to love

- From serving self
- To devotion and service to Christ

3. A Community To Belong To

The Study found that youth whose faith made a difference in their lives had...

- Significant adults model and mentor and build loving relationships
- Parents especially model the faith

a)) Parents

“Most young people who say religion is important to them come from families who have intentionally invested in their children’s religious formation, and come from congregations where they feel at least superficially connected to God.”

Ephesians 6:4

b) Watching others model Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:9

- *We have welcomed the role that many Christians have played in our children’s lives.*
- *We have sought to play a role in other children’s lives as well.*

c) Youth can learn to articulate beliefs and actively trust in God by observing others in church

- Youth group & Sunday School can provide opportunities
 - to verbalize their beliefs
- When an adult shares a testimony in church,
 - they are providing a model to young people
 - for how to articulate their faith to others

4. A Hope to Hold Onto

The Study found that youth whose faith made a difference in their lives had...

- A Hope & confidence that
 - God has things under control
 - Who will make things work out for good in the end.

Matthew 6:33 - For our temporal needs

John 3:16 - For our eternal needs

Romans 5:1-6 - Therefore we have hope

Rom 8:28 - This God will accomplish his purpose in us who love Him

Summary

1. A Creed To Believe In

- Clear understanding of beliefs
- Able to articulate them

2. A Call To Live Out

- Something higher than self
- Contrast Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: What’s in it for me

3. A Community To Belong To

- Significant adults model and mentor and build loving relationships
- Parents especially model the faith

4. A Hope to Hold Onto

- A Hope & confidence that
 - God has things under control
 - Who will make things work out for good in the end for those who love Him