

Post Adolescence as a Life Phase

A Genuine Hunger

Approximately 74.2 million Americans, ages nine to twenty six, are known as Generation Y (Johnson 2006). They are interested in things concerning faith but distance themselves from dead religion. Accordingly, Johnson tells us that “spirituality is the fastest growing adult book category in the country...and Christian music sales now exceed those of classical, jazz, and new age music combined” (198). It appears that the more one digs into the needs, desires, and characteristics of the young adult; the more one sees how the local church could prove to be God’s hand extended.

Post Adolescence as a Life Phase

In the 1950s Erik Erikson proposed a theory that humans go through various life stages. For those between the ages of 20-30 years old he basically divided them into two distinct life stages. When Erikson proposed his life phases, young adults were marrying at early ages and establishing their own households, independent from their families of origin while in their late teens or very early twenties. They plunged into “adulthood” as they moved into the workforce, supported their own household, and began to have children of their own. In today’s culture, young adults are staying in college longer and marrying much later. Many remain unmarried till their late twenties or early thirties. It is not uncommon for women to begin having children in their early to mid thirties. Post adolescence is seen “as starting at the age of eighteen or nineteen and as ending before or after one’s 30th birthday” (Schweitzer 2004, 64). Post adolescent people tend to distance themselves from religious affiliation. This distancing merits more attention than we have

given it in the past. Solutions to understanding this age group in terms of the Christian faith are only beginning to be approached with intensity.

Within this age group, there are also various subgroups to consider. There are those who are single, single parents, married, and separated or divorced. It is an age when young adults make serious life decisions with long-term consequences. Schweitzer (2004) mentions there is “a need for programs that directly address the life situations and questions that are central to the stage of this life cycle” (79). According to Schweitzer, it is not uncommon for people in this age group to come to the place that the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher calls the “second childhood.” It is a testing and re-ordering of the orientations one has found for life and faith that may have been part of childhood. For those who have come from Christian backgrounds, it is a window of opportunity to help them process the biblical narrative in light of their emerging adulthood. For those who do not come from Christian backgrounds, there is this window of opportunity in their second childhood to embrace the simplicity of faith in Christ with all its childlike attributes.

REFERENCE LIST

Johnson, Lisa. 2006. *Mind Your X's and Y's*. New York: Free Press.

Schweitzer, Friedrich L. 2004. *The Postmodern Life Cycle*. ST. Louis, MO: Chalice Press.