

HELP TEENAGERS FORM THEIR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Conformity and peer pressure threaten to squeeze the individuality right out of teenagers. As they're confronted with choices and expectations, kids are often terrified to be identified as different. Discouragement and hopelessness can leave teenagers even more vulnerable to unhealthy, unsafe pressures.

In *The Religious Life of Young Americans*, George Gallup Jr. and Robert Bezilla offer these six things teenagers need when facing challenges and pressures:

1. The belief that life is meaningful and has a purpose. For Christians, the ultimate meaning and purpose are found in a relationship with Jesus.
2. A sense of community. "Radical individualism" leads to loneliness. Kids need deep relationships with positive, supportive role models and peers.
3. To be appreciated and loved. The closer people feel to God, say the authors, the better they feel about themselves. They also have a happier outlook.
4. To be listened to and heard.
5. To feel like one is growing in faith. Young people need support as they pass through various "faith passages."
6. Practical help in developing a mature faith. By partnering with your church and youth minister, you can guide teenagers into owning their faith.

TIPS >>>

Celebrate your teenagers' uniqueness with these insights from youth leaders Steve Argue and Dave Livermore:

- **Avoid saying, "When I was your age."** That will just cause kids to shut down. We can't make our own experience the primary reference point for teenagers.
- **Value your teenagers for their "in process" selves.** Don't focus just on the future and on the person your son or daughter is becoming.
- **Be willing to tackle the "messy reality" of faith.** When you talk about your own journey, be sure to include failures as well as successes.

Don't worry about using the correct Christian lingo or having all the right answers.

- **Honor your teenagers' unique ideas and expressions.** Tell them, in specific ways, how they're inspiring you to follow Jesus and serve others.
- **Watch for examples of individuality and hope.** Together, seek out news reports that highlight people's differences and explore their transformations for the better.
- **Help your teenagers embrace the "messiness" of life.** Let them know you'll support them through all its twists and turns.

THE VIEW

- In a poll of more than 700,000 American kids ages 10 to 18, 53% said they're hopeful, with numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future. Meanwhile, 31% said they're stuck and 16% said they're discouraged, lacking ideas and energy to navigate problems and reach goals. Reports of hopefulness varied little across age and grade levels.

(Gallup Student Poll)

- In an ongoing survey, only 6% of respondents say they've been affected by peer pressure in a positive way.

(survelum.com)

PONDER THIS

- How would you characterize your own identity and purpose? When did you find that—or are you still searching?
- What are you hopeful about? What are your biggest discouragements? Explain.
- What traits or qualities make your teenagers stand out from the crowd, and how do you celebrate those things?





GOING DEEPER

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Chuck Bomar

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, student-ministry pastor **Chuck Bomar** discusses the importance of identity in Christ, especially for older teenagers:

For college-age people, the search for identity goes to an entirely different level. They have dreams but most lack a sense of direction as to how to get there. Here are some areas in which young people need to embrace their spiritual identity in Christ:

- **Beyond the crowd.**

Although we can never completely separate our identity as Christians

from the body of Christ, we still must have a personal relationship with Jesus.

- **Beyond sin.** The number-one ingredient to a mediocre Christian life is wrongfully identifying our selves in sin struggles rather than in Christ.
- **Beyond circumstances.** Young people may not yet have a career identity or a romantic relationship, but they can identify themselves in one abstract truth: hope in Jesus Christ.

- **Beyond sociological changes.** Because today's young people live in a fast-paced world of change, their identity must be found outside of their situations (good or bad).

- **Beyond the American dream.** Help young people move past society's standard of "success" to a point of contentment where they're okay with doing and being anything God has for them. Young people in college or preparing for college feel a tremendous amount of pressure in this area, and you could be the breath of fresh air they need.

RESOURCE



In the devotional *The Way I'm Wired* (Simply Youth Ministry), Life Purpose coach Katie Brazelton helps young people put together the puzzle of God's plan for their life and teaches that God never intended for their purpose to be a big mystery.

BIBLE FOCUS

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

Romans 12:2

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



COLBIE CAILLAT

Background: The 26-year-old singer's laid-back style has earned her numerous fans and awards. She's been nominated for Teen Choice Awards and has won two Grammy Awards. In 2010, Caillat was named BMI's songwriter of the year.

Albums: *All of You* (2011), *Breakthrough* (2009), *Coco* (2007)

What Caillat Says: When asked about staying grounded while living in party-happy Los Angeles, she says, "I'm not going out to clubs. I'm pretty much a homebody. I've had the same friends since fifth grade. My family raised me well, and we like each other, and we hang out. It's all a matter of who you are and who you associate with."

Explore: Caillat's songs deal mostly with the highs and lows of love. You can hear many of her songs on her Myspace page: www.myspace.com/colbiecaillat. Her Grammy-winning duet with Jason Mraz is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=acvIVA9-FMQ.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



MAT KEARNEY

Background: Singer-songwriter Kearney picked up a guitar in college, moved to Nashville, and never looked back. His songs have been featured in numerous TV shows and movies. In 2006, he won the Dove Award for Rap/Hip-Hop Song of the Year. Kearney's new album brings back some of his hip-hop roots.

Albums: *Young Love* (2011), *City of Black and White* (2009), *Nothing Left to Lose* (2006)

What Kearney Says: Regarding college and his eventual faith in God, he says, "I guess I lived it up and did what everyone said you should do in college. I discovered the depth of depravity, the bleakness of that lifestyle. It just wasn't working. I finally started understanding there must be more to life."

Explore: "Hey Mama," the first video from *Young Love*, is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9qUMr6feOI.

MOVIES

Movie: *Final Destination 5*

Genre: Horror

Rating: R

Synopsis: A young man has a premonition and saves a group of people in a bridge collapse. But those people weren't supposed to survive, so Death is coming for them now.

Our Take: According to the MPAA, this film doesn't contain sex or nudity, but it will more than make up for that in gruesome death and dismemberments.

Movie: *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*

Genre: Action-Adventure/Sci-Fi

Rating: N/A (probably PG-13)

Synopsis: When doctors test a super-cure on a chimpanzee, the animal becomes far smarter than they anticipated. Soon it leads a revolution against humans.

Our Take: The special effects on the film's trailer look terrific, but this franchise has already been rebooted once—with poor results. This film might be a good opportunity to discuss evolution vs. Creation.

For more media discussions and ideas, go to www.MinistryandMedia.com.

VIDEO GAMES



Deus Ex: Human Revolution—The "Deus Ex" series prides itself on excellent writing and compelling gameplay. You are Adam Jensen, whose life was saved with implanted cybernetic limbs. Adam now must find out who's behind the biotechnology and what it means for all of mankind. This violent shooter game will be too mature for teenagers.

Madden NFL 12—This squeaky-clean game puts you in the coach's seat as you control your team's destiny. The realism has increased with each new iteration of the successful franchise. Even if the NFL lockout means there's no real football this year, you can still have your own season at home.