Rethinking Faith Formation: Christian Identity and Practice in a Pluralistic World

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• “It is very difficult to have a conversation with someone who is not speaking.”

• Imam Mansoor Sabri
• Random sampling of 3,370 American youth (13-17 years-old) conducted July 2002-March 2003. Results here are for those identified as “mainline Protestant.” Other categories were conservative Protestant, Black Protestant, Roman Catholic, not religious, Mormon, Jewish, more than one religion, other.
1. What percent of mainline Protestant young people believe in God?

A. 96%
B. 86%
C. 76%
1. What percent of mainline Protestant young people believe in God?

A. 96%
B. 86%
C. 76%
2. What percent of mainline Protestant youth have made a personal commitment to live life for God?

• A. 70%
• B. 60%
• C. 50%
2. What percent of mainline Protestant youth have made a personal commitment to live life for God?

A. 70%

B. 60%

C. 50%
• 3. What percent of mainline Protestant youth have had an experience of worship that was very moving and powerful?

• A. 74%

• B. 64%

• C. 54%
3. What percent of mainline Protestant youth have had an experience of worship that was very moving and powerful?

A. 74%
B. 64%
C. 54%
• 4. What percent of mainline Protestant young people pray alone at least once a day?

• A. 52%
• B. 42%
• C. 32%
4. What percent of mainline Protestant young people pray alone at least once a day?

A. 52%
B. 42%
C. 32%
5. What percent of mainline Protestant young people had a family that prayed regularly before or after meals?

- A. 74%
- B. 54%
- C. 34%
5. What percent of mainline Protestant young people had a family that prayed regularly before or after meals?

- A. 74%
- B. 54%
- C. 34%
6. What percent of mainline Protestant young people reported that their congregation was rarely or never boring?

A. 64%
B. 44%
C. 24%
6. What percent of mainline Protestant young people reported that their congregation was rarely or never boring?

- A. 64%
- B. 44%
- C. 24%
• 7. What percent of mainline Protestant youth said they had adults in their congregation other than family members with whom they enjoyed talking and who gave lots of encouragement?

• A. 84%
• B. 54%
• C. 34%
7. What percent of mainline Protestant youth said they had adults in their congregation other than family members with whom they enjoyed talking and who gave lots of encouragement?

A. 84%

B. 54%

C. 34%
8. What percent of mainline Protestant youth said they believed that many religions may be true?

- A. 77%
- B. 67%
- C. 57%
8. What percent of mainline Protestant youth said they believed that many religions may be true?

A. 77%
B. 67%
C. 57%
9. What percent of mainline Protestant youth agreed that for believers to be truly religious and spiritual, they needed to be involved in a congregation on a regular basis?

- A. 47%
- B. 37%
- C. 27%
9. What percent of mainline Protestant youth agreed that for believers to be truly religious and spiritual, they needed to be involved in a congregation on a regular basis?

A. 47%

B. 37%

C. 27%
Nearness and Directness

Being near to faith and its traditions is pivotal to faith nurture with youth.

• Adults live out their faith in natural and expressive ways.
• Young person feels she has a place in the church.
• Young person develops deep relationships with adult Christian models.
• Families consistently and genuinely express their faith and faith commitments.
There must be specific times when faith is presented directly to young people.

- The gospel is presented in an appealing, fair, and open way.
- The focus on a decision is one aspect of the journey of transformation and conversion.
- Decisions happen on God’s timetable.
- Youth are offered a faith decision in relation to their maturity, life experience, and interest.
Source: Pew Forum on Religion and the Public Life (2012)
• Of the 20% who self-identified as none or no religion....

• 50% had no childhood religious initiation ceremony.

• 65% of those who are or were married had no religious marriage ceremony.

• 68% are in their 20s and 30s.

• 78% said they were “spiritual” persons and said that some “god” or “higher power” exists.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Souls in Transition - The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults in America
Christian Smith with Patricia Snell
New York: Oxford University Press, 2009
1. Committed Traditionalists.
   • “I am deeply committed.” (15 %)
2. Selective Adherents.
   • “I do some of what I can.” (30 %)
3. Spiritually Open.
   • “There’s probably something more out there.” (15 %)
4. Religiously Indifferent.
   • “It just doesn’t matter much.” (25 %)
5. Religiously Disconnected.
   • “I really don’t know what you’re talking about.” (5 %)
6. Irreligious.
Teen experienced high parental religious service & attendance & importance of faith

Teen placed high importance on faith

Teen claimed numerous personal religious experiences

Teen had many adults to whom to turn for support and help

Teen frequently prayed and read the Bible

Teen had fewer serious doubts about religious beliefs