Is Public School to Blame?

June 30, 2011

I was having a conversation recently about the reason so many students turn away from the church after high school, and it was suggested that it's because they don't get the proper biblical worldview/foundation in public school and only get an hour during the week at church.

It seems to me this is a big generalization since public school students can get a strong foundation in the home and Christian school and home school students don't necessarily get a good foundation (or it is a skewed perspective that actually turns them away from the church).

So I started thinking about the data that has been collected on this and wondered when the information is gathered and compiled if it takes into account what kind of schooling the student had – public, private Christian or homeschool. My guess is that the data wouldn't be significantly different if you did divide the three groups.

Also, does it make a difference if they go to a public college or a Christian college? I would hope that students who go to a Christian college are more likely to continue going to church and to have a more biblical worldview, but is that true?

Good question. Actually, studies show parents are the most influential in regard to the beliefs of young adults. So you're right, school really has little to do with it. As a kid who went to public school and loved it, I'm actually quite offended by this very unfair, very common stereotype about public school. Truth be told, public school forced me to know what I believed and why in a way a Christian environment couldn't have.

You're also right that going to a Christian college can be

really helpful, but it depends on the college/university, and it depends on the person. I know going to a Christ-centered university where integration of faith (worldview) and learning was important was super-helpful for me. However, if I had gone to a public university, I know I would have been involved in a local church and a campus ministry; studies also show that such involvement significantly lowers the risk of faith abandonment during the college years. Community is key.

All that to say, public school, private school, home school… it doesn't really matter. When we grown-ups complain about the worldview issues of young adults, we really have no one but ourselves to blame because in both the home and the church, young people are watching how we walk the talk.

This blog post originally appeared at
reneamac.com/2011/06/30/is-public-school-to-blame/

Why Kids Leave the Church After High School

The Youth Transition Network has released the results of research about why 70% of students in high school youth groups have left the church within a year after high school graduation.

One big reason is the unrealistic expectations that our young people sense from parents and church authority figures. When asked, "What does it mean to be a good Christian," students responded with a long list of do's and don'ts, always and nevers:

• No sex

- No secular music
- No fun
- No profanity
- No bad attitudes
- Be perfect
- Be a virgin
- Be wholly devoted to God
- Be righteous
- Be a role model
- Don’t doubt
- Have all the spiritual answers
- Always be positive
- Always be in a good mood
- Wear proper clothing
- Go to church all the time
- Always read your Bible
- Always be praying
- Know the whole Bible
- Get along with everyone
- Always be happy
- Never talk back
- Do not fail
- Do not fail
- Do not fail

Wow. And that’s a PARTIAL list! If someone said to you, “This is what it means to be a Christian,” would you want to sign up?

What’s also heartbreaking is what ISN’T on the list:

Reveling in God’s love for me
Appreciating His gifts of grace and mercy
Loving God back because I am so moved by His tender love for me

No wonder so many students live a “goody-two-shoes” Christian life on Sundays and Wednesday nights, and a completely other,

separate life the rest of the week! No wonder they don't see the point of staying connected to a church once their parents stop making them go.

So many of our students feel that they can't be successful Christians. They think it's hopeless to live up to the expectations they sense. They think that being a Christian is just too hard.

Sounds like they need to be introduced to what grace looks like. Sounds like they need to have it modeled to them. Sounds like the rest of us need to embrace it ourselves and live it out so they can see it up close and personal, and see why following Jesus is so much more than checking off the boxes on our spiritual report cards!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/why_kids_leave_the_church_after_high_school on April 28, 2009.

What's Happening to Our Youth? – Christians Should Be Concerned

You've probably heard for some time that the youth from our churches have been having a tough time when they make the transition from high school to adulthood, whether that is to college, the workforce or the military. Josh McDowell addressed this in his latest book, *The Last Christian Generation*, where he documented that research indicates that anywhere from 69 to 94 percent of our youth are leaving the

church after high school. And few are returning.

Other organizations suggest the figure is between 55 and 88 percent. Either way, the picture isn't good. Our youth are in trouble and we need a vigorous and coordinated response. Recently I attended a meeting of national youth and college ministry leaders to help forge a response to this growing problem. Hosted by the folks at Youth Transition Network, YTN, (www.youthtransitionnetwork.org) some troubling observations emerged.

Many in our youth culture are living double lives. One life is meant to be invisible at church (they know the right behaviors and speak "Christianese" to pass as good kids). In the other life they follow worldly pursuits in secret, away from parents and church leaders among friends who accept them as they are. This is motivated by what YTN director Jeff Schadt calls a triangle of discouragement (see: www.liveabove.com/NewsReadyText.aspx?thispage=1)

One leg of the triangle is the burdensome sense of guilt over their moral failures coupled with a sense of isolation. They don't feel free to talk with anyone about their guilt. Basically they feel like a spiritual failure.

The second leg of the triangle involves what they feel is a disconnect between a gospel of grace and expectations of perfection from parents and church leaders. They're not smart enough, spiritual enough, attractive enough, etc. They just don't feel like they measure up.

The third leg brings all this together in an overall sense of not feeling trusted, believed in or accepted, warts and all. Thats a pretty nasty triumvirate.

Add to this the fact that 93% of graduating high school seniors can't name even one college ministry. Therefore, they mistrust what they don't know and fail to get connected. Most college freshman also feel unprepared for the level of freedom

college affords and are frequently overwhelmed by the level and difficulty of work the university expects.

As Josh McDowell also points out, the majority of our graduating youth don't believe Jesus is the one true Son of God, don't believe Jesus rose from the dead, don't believe in Satan and don't believe the Holy Spirit is real.

I learned a lot at this meeting. What struck me the most was the universal reaction from both high school youth leaders and college ministers. They all admitted that the problem was not new, but that they didn't realize how large and universal it was. One college worker asked Jeff Schadt if any of the 800 students he interviewed said anything about being motivated by love. Without hesitation, he said "No!" This only increased my resolve for Probe Ministries to be a part of the solution and not part of the problem. Our week-long Mind Games Conference will continue to prepare high school juniors and seniors for the challenge of college—but with a greater emphasis on the available resources and an even bigger helping of trust, acceptance and love.

Check out these additional resources for more information and help in making this critical transition easier and more fruitful:

• www.youthtransitionnetwork.org: Official site for Youth Transition Network.

• www.liveabove.com offers resources for youth leaders to help their students make the transition and offers help for students in locating a campus ministry and even a Christian roommate.

• college101seminars.com offers informational programs for churches and secular institutions on helping their students make a profitable transition.

• Conversations CDthis information page introduces a tool

designed to help navigate the pitfalls of higher learning, construct a biblical worldview, answer life's toughest questions and make great grades. The well-done sections on making better grades hosted by Dr. Walter Bradley are worth their weight in gold.

• www.boundless.org/college contains links for articles designed to help Christians survive and thrive in college (and beyond). "Ask Theophilus" is particularly helpful.

• TrueU.org is a general site for students of faith.

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"Can You Suggest Graduation Gifts With Worldview In Mind?"

We are desiring to give each of our graduates an age appropriate gift, i.e., 8th grade, High School, and College, for graduation. We want to give them something to help them think through the Christian worldview in light of the culture they are being raised in.

Great question! We are in the "business" of providing such resources for kids and adults especially useful for those headed to secular university or college so anything on our site is appropriate, as well as the books & sites below.

The Reasons to Believe section of Probe.org is a great place for starters.

Resources written for children up to about 8th grade:

Here are Amazon.com listings by journalist turned Christian apologetics author extraordinaire Lee Strobel (note emphasis on titles very similar but not the same):

- *The Case for a **Creator** for Kids*
- *The Case for **Christ** for Kids*
- *The Case for **Faith** for Kids*
- *Off My Case for Kids: 12 Stories to Help You Defend Your Faith*
- *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God (more grown-up edition)*
- *The Case for Faith—Student Edition*

Also, see:

- *My Heart Christ's Home: Retold for Children (don't know grade level) by Robert Boyd Munger OR*
- *My Heart Christ's Home (original)*

Other suggestions for high school grads, possibly 8th graders:

- *Ethix: Being Bold in a Whatever World, by Sean McDowell (son of Josh McDowell, good author, speaker, thinker in his own right; this book written somewhat to youth leaders, perhaps—I've only sampled it; great illustrations especially about absolute truth vs. relative truth and morality)*
- *How to Stay Christian in College, by J. Budziszewski—My wife and I give this one to high school grads for obvious reasons, given the title. J. Budziszewski is a one-of-a-kind critical*

thinker who matches his intellect with caring for kids. See his columns under Ask Theophilus at Boundless.org—excellent narratives of paraphrased professor-student conversations about deep, real life issues from a Christian worldview.

Note: I suggest the 1999 edition, although there's a newer one (Th1nk books, a NavPress imprint). This older one contains many useful links, many from a site I used to edit:

LeaderU.com. Massively useful for scholarly work like writing papers, essays, debates. Most or all of the links cited in the book should still work.

Chris Chrisman Goes to College: and Faces the Challenges of Relativism, Individualism and Pluralism. From the master of worldview, James Sire, brought down off the proverbial shelf for laypeople, this fictional account of three new collegians creatively tackles the topics in the book's subtitle. Particularly interesting: Sire "identifies no fewer than six types of relativism," according to the cover.

For college or high school grads:

Welcome To College: A Christ-Followers Guide for the Journey, by Jonathan Morrow. This sweeping, but accessible and succinct volume contains 42 chapters that ask: What do Christians really believe? Can I put that into words for unbelievers? What is the nature of truth and how do we know things? What about sex? Finances? How should a Christian worldview inform my entire life and experience? and much more. Packs a worldview wallop.

Making Your Faith Your Own, A Guidebook for Believers With Questions, by Teresa Vining. See the top review of a pastor's wife.

The second review at Amazon.com of the above book is by my colleague, Sue Bohlin, whose responses on scores of questions

from believers and unbelievers, posted here on Probe.org, are worth their weight in gold:

Probe Answers Your Email. Look for Sue Bohlin's responses particularly, especially in the Marriage & Family, Sexuality, Homosexuality and Gender sections, but elsewhere as well. Michael Gleghorn is great on theology & philosophy. This set of 500-600 answers is good for high school, college, adult, sometimes younger, depending on topics.

My Utmost for His Highest (latest edition), Oswald Chambers

A subscription to our own *Probe-Alert* e-letter (always free, every two weeks, relevant new materials and more) might be a good "freebie"—they'll have to approve it via email. Or, to avoid that and make it a one-step operation, send a list of emails to me and I'll mass subscribe them manually.

I hope you find this helpful. God bless you and your graduates and may they thrive in their faith as they move to their next life-step.

Byron Barlowe

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