

# What's the Problem With Today's Young People?

by Eric Dwyer

American youth who profess to be Christians are looking more and more like youth who do not claim to follow Jesus. As a youth minister, I can tell you the numbers are sad, but not surprising.

A confidential poll of youth done by the Josephson Institute of Ethics is revealing, as displayed in the chart below. When asked if they had behaved in a certain manner in the past 12 months there is little statistical difference between "church kids" and kids who do not attend church.

According to this study, there is no more than a 4% difference between the attitudes and actions of professing Christian youth and non-Christian young people. (Source: The Last Christian Generation by Josh McDowell, Green Key Books, © 2006)

BEHAVIOR	NON-CHRISTIAN	CHRISTIAN
Physically hurt someone when angered	67%	63%
Lied to a parent	93%	93%
Lied to a teacher	85%	83%
Cheated on a test	76%	74%
Satisfied with their ethics and moral character	90%	91%

We have youth ministers, don't we? The kids have their own youth room and lessons. Right? What gives? The problems are far too many and too serious to nail down in a newsletter article. But

we shouldn't be surprised that kids who grew up not caring about the Bible had kids (or grandkids) of their own who do not care about the Bible. Generation after generation seems to be slipping further away from Biblical Truth. It can be easy to get frustrated with the kids and say, "Why can't they get their act together?" But many of them have not been dealt the best hand in life. It is true they are responsible for their actions. They have no one to blame for their sin but themselves. But sometimes you can't help but feel sorry for the broken system in which they have been raised. Kids have been pawned off at every turn by parents who don't seem to care for them (much less LOVE them), and who show no (zero, zilch, none, nada) concern for their spiritual well-being. One parent told me he is allowing his kids to "find their own path."

So what can you do about this problem? First, realize that reaching out to youth is a need. It is not a want. One girl told another youth sponsor and me that she wishes either of us was her father. This didn't sound like a, "My daddy made me eat all my vegetables before I could have dessert" hissy fit. By being youth sponsors, we were filling a void in her faith left by the man God put on earth to show her His nature.

Second, do something about it. Knowing the good you ought to do and doing nothing about it is sinful. Get involved in your youth ministry. Hang out with us on trips, events, and even in lessons. I've never heard a kid say, "I have enough friends." It may be outside of your comfort zone, but that's okay. Don't expect them to come to you. It may be louder than usual. It may be messy. They dress funny. "Eric, I don't think I can teach a lesson to kids." That's okay. Mentoring them looks different than the way you were mentored as a kid, but you can do it. They need to see your life. They need to see your love for them. As is true with adults, kids won't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

They don't trust much because the family, the fabric of that trust, has been broken from their birth. You may not even know the impact you have on a kid. But if you trust God and say, "Put me in the ring with those weirdoes God; I love them because you do," you'll be amazed by what He will do.

Finally, say a prayer of thanks for Godly parents. They are in the growing minority these days. We have a problem. You can be part of the solution. Will you accept the challenge?