

# **Third Culture Kids and Adolescence: Cultural Creations**

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## Preface

About a quarter of a century ago, as our children began turning into adolescents, I became interested in how our culture had created adolescence. Only as Bonnie (my wife) and I studied how the concept of adolescence had developed were we able to understand it. We also discovered things we could do to help our teenagers, techniques that have worked for thousands of years. I want to express my appreciation to Bonnie as well as to Keith, Cheryl, and Kent for the joy of those years as we lived out their adolescence together.

About a decade ago after our own adolescents left home, Bonnie and I became personally involved with cross-cultural workers and their children. We have spent much time with the Third Culture Kids who were students at Asbury College during their frequent Sunday dinners with us. Our conversations around the table were not only enjoyable but also very enlightening. I want to express my appreciation to those TCKs as well as to those TCKs who came to us to talk personally. I also wish to express my appreciation to Jean, Keturah, and Naomi Kingery (two TCKs and their mother), Bob Moore and Dave Rightmire (two Bible professors), Art and Kathy Nonneman (psychologist and nurse), and Yvonne Moulton (editor), all who made invaluable comments about the manuscript. Of course, I take full responsibility for any omissions or errors.

*Third Culture Kids and Adolescence: Cultural Creations* is written specifically for adolescent TCKs. Of course, the information in it is applicable to other adolescents as well. Each chapter ends with a section, "What can adolescent TCKs do?" The chapters are short so that each one takes only a few minutes to read. They are written in non-technical language, meant to be an

“easy read.” The chapters present basic facts simply and include practical applications for adolescent TCKs.

Much of my professional life has been devoted to working with and studying adolescents and TCKs. Although this book is not highly documented with numerous scholarly journal references and Scripture references, I have tried to present the best knowledge about human development within an evangelical Christian perspective. From time to time I have cited specific passages of Scripture to support particular points. As often as possible I have illustrated concepts by using examples of TCKs from the Bible, such as Daniel, Joseph, and Esther.

This book is meant to be a handbook for adolescent TCKs, a book with short chapters on particular relevant topics pertaining to adolescence. The chapters are not intended as in-depth treatments of the topics but as brief overviews including practical suggestions. The book is written with a unified theme gradually developed from one chapter to the next. For readers who insist on jumping directly into a particular topic in the middle of the book, let me warn you that those chapters will not make sense unless you already know the material presented in Parts 1 and 2 (Chapters 1-6). This information was not available until about a quarter of a century ago, and it is vital to an understanding of adolescence.

Some parents may believe that specific material is not suitable for their own adolescents, at least at their current ages. If that is the case, those parents can easily censor whatever material (even entire chapters) they find objectionable by simply deleting it if they have downloaded the book in a Microsoft Word (.doc) format. If you delete ANYTHING, please remember that adolescents need to be warned about the great danger of some activities. If you delete anything, I would ask that you not further distribute the document you have censored to anyone else—but please do tell others that the book is available on [www.crossculturalworkers.com](http://www.crossculturalworkers.com). Please let them be the judge of what they and their children read.

The best book available about TCKs is *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds* by David Pollock

and Ruth Van Reken, published in 2001 jointly by Intercultural Press ([www.interculturalpress.com](http://www.interculturalpress.com)) and Nicholas Brealey Publishing ([www.nbrealey-books.com](http://www.nbrealey-books.com)), and it can be found in many bookstores as well as online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or other sites. I highly recommend this book for TCKs.

A much fuller treatment of adolescence itself is my book, *Understanding Adolescence*, published by Victor Books in 1987. That book, written for parents, has been out of print for more than 15 years. I obtained the publication rights for that book, updated it in 2005, and posted it online at [www.crossculturalworkers.com](http://www.crossculturalworkers.com). You may download it free of charge there. If you prefer an original bound copy (without the 2005 updates), used copies are often available online. Book distributors, such as amazon.com, usually list used books (26 copies of *Understanding Adolescence* available at amazon.com as I write this, usually ship in 1-2 days). Also copies can usually be found in used book stores online by using search engines, such as Google (17 sources found as I write this). If you would like a fuller discussion about adolescence, try one of these routes.

## Introduction

Sometimes we need to view our passport culture through the eyes of another culture to see it as it really is. A few days ago I received an email from a United States citizen living in Asia, one who said that during the last few months she had been looking into local medicine and its effectiveness. She said she wasn't surprised to learn that urine was a "miracle drug" for the people where she lived, but she was surprised to learn that many areas in Europe still use urine medicinally. I wrote back:

You may not realize that refined urine has been a "miracle drug" for more than 50 years for women here in the USA. The refined urine most often swallowed (not applied to the skin by wrapping it around their heads) by many millions of women here is the urine of pregnant mares. It may even be that your "moms" here in the States take it. The women take it because they and their physicians believe it will make them feel better, help them remain young, keep their bones stronger, and protect them from heart attacks and strokes. During the last few years some have stopped taking it because they no longer believe it will protect them from circulatory problems (and may even increase such problems), but many millions still take it for the other reasons. Of course, it is not marketed here as urine, but as HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy), and the marketing is aimed at older women, those in their 50s or above. One of the best known is sold as PREMARIN (PREgnant MARE urINE). I just checked my *Physicians Desk Reference* for PREMARIN, and the PDR points out that it is "obtained

from exclusively natural sources." PREMARIN INTRAVENOUS is also available for those who want to feed it more directly into their bloodstream, and PREMARIN CREAM is available for those women who want to apply it directly to their skin.

To introduce the material covered in this book, imagine that someone from a century or two (or a millennium or two) ago were to visit the contemporary United States of America. Following is what they might report:

We have just discovered a relatively new culture in the central part of the North American continent. Since we do not have space to report on all aspects of this culture, we have chosen to report about the teen years—years which contain some of the more bizarre customs. Rather than becoming full members of society when they mature, the young adults have to wait at least five or ten years before they do so. The culture has created a period between childhood and adulthood, a period which they call "adolescence." Although the young adults have become adults, the society still treats them as children and calls them "boys and girls."

We could find no logical reason for this prolonged period when young adults are in limbo. Talking with them, we find that they have the cognitive capacities of other adults. They can think logically and abstractly. The young adults are able to make the same types of judgments about right and wrong as other adults. However, they are much less responsible than our own young adults. In fact, when they commit crimes, the older adults do not hold them responsible, noting that they are "just children" going through a phase and will grow out of it. They can even commit murder and receive little punishment. In fact, when the young adults do wrong, the parents are often blamed for it.

They have no ceremonies that indicate clearly when persons become adults, or even what this culture calls adolescents. Young adults may be charged adult fees in one place and then next door be charged the children's rate. Young adults have to pay adult rates to eat, but they are not allowed to drink alcoholic beverages until they are 21 years of age. They also seem to have no real place in their communities, no sense of belonging with the other adults there. Likewise, the young adults have little sense of identity from their church or family. Of course, all of this is because they are not treated as adults, so they do not really fit anywhere. About half of them leave home during their late teen years and live in large buildings they call "dormitories" at a place they call the university.

Rather than allowing young adults to marry when they reach puberty, this culture has passed laws that adolescents cannot marry until about five years later. Furthermore, their economic situation makes marriage impossible for most people until a decade or more after they are sexually mature. During this time they are not to engage in sexual activity; however, as you might expect, most do. After all, the young men are at the age of their greatest sexual desires. One would think that adolescents would be kept in groups or at least carefully supervised when interacting as couples. However, while "dating," their custom for finding marriage partners, the male and female are usually alone with each other. As a part of their courtship they have developed the activity of "petting" in which they sexually arouse each other but are not to have intercourse. As one would expect, the majority do have intercourse before marriage.

Odd as it may seem, anyone who suggests that parents be involved in the choice of a spouse is simply ridiculed. Not only are parents not directly involved, but they are also not even present as mates are chosen. Most adolescents choose their own marriage partners after

leaving home, and many "fall in love" without even meeting the family of their prospective spouse. Rather than looking at family background, ability to get along with others, a sense of responsibility, knowledge to manage a home, and so forth, the couple meet together for brief periods of recreation. As near as we can tell, their "love" is primarily sexual attraction.

Though the young adults are fully grown, they are not expected to work. In fact, laws forbid their working at many jobs until five or more years after they have reached full size. Even though they mature at 12-14 years of age, they are not allowed to work at many jobs until they are at least 18 years of age. Since the young adults are not allowed to work, the culture has passed laws that they must attend school until they are far past the age of puberty, most often until they are 18 and can work a full-time job. Many of the young adults do not like going to school and learn little while there.

As one would expect, often neither the young adults nor the parents like this whole system, but there is nothing they can do about it. Young adults have no sense of who they are so they are often consumed with trying to answer the question, "Who am I?" Many children are born to unmarried parents, and each year there is about one divorce for every two marriages. It is hard to understand why this culture ever developed the customs it has developed, and few people know what to do about it.

Now let us consider how western culture created adolescence, how two or more cultures create Third Culture Kids, and what TCK adolescents can do as they live out their own adolescence.

## Part 1

### Before Adolescence

Adolescence, as we know it today, is a relatively recent invention, and in Part 1, we are considering what life was like before western culture created adolescence. Until a century or two ago, people went directly from being children to being adults, even in western culture. This transition was often marked by a meaningful ceremony, and sometimes there was a brief period (usually not more than a year) when the new adult was on a kind of “probation.” In those days, like in some cultures today, it was clear who were children and who were adults—and the only “adolescents” were those experiencing their growth spurts.

Although Third Culture Kids (TCKs) have existed for thousands of years, only during the last half century have people become aware of the characteristics of TCKs. During the 1950s Drs. John and Ruth Hill Useem studied American families living in India. Of course, while there they met expatriate families from other countries as well. The Useems discovered that those who had spent time growing up in a culture other than that of their parents often had much in common regardless of what the cultures were. They proposed the term “Third Culture Kids” to describe these individuals.

The chapters in Part 1 describe teenagers who were not adolescents. Chapter 1 is about teenagers who were neither TCKs nor adolescents. Chapter 2 is about teenagers who were TCKs but not adolescents. Understanding the differences between teenagers, TCKs, and adolescents is vital in navigating those confusing years. Both chapters end with suggestions for adolescent TCKs.

## Chapter 1

### Mary & Peter: Teenagers (but neither TCKs nor Adolescents)

“Jesus was a teenager, but never an adolescent.” That remark by a guest Sunday school teacher immediately caught my attention. How could that be? Aren’t teenagers and adolescents the same thing. Our oldest child had just become a teenager, and the truth of that statement radically changed the way we treated him then, as well as the way we treated our two younger children when they became teenagers. It also occupied much of my thinking for the next decade. Let us consider some people who lived during Jesus time, people who were teenagers, but neither TCKs nor adolescents.

#### Mary

All who lived in New Testament times were teenagers, but none were adolescents. Mary, along with Martha and Lazarus (her sister and brother), lived in their family home in Bethany just a couple miles east of Jerusalem, about six miles northeast of Bethlehem. Mary often sat with the disciples and listened as Jesus taught. One time when she did not help cook, Martha scolded her and tattled to Jesus (Luke 10). Another time Mary, heartbroken at the death of her brother, watched as Jesus brought him back to life (John 11). She had been a teenager but neither an adolescent nor a third culture kid (TCK).

## Peter

Peter was probably present when Mary's brother was raised from the dead. He lived and worked in Galilee about 85 miles north of Bethany. He and his brother were fishermen, and one day Jesus asked to teach from Peter's boat near the shore of the Sea of Galilee. After Jesus finished speaking, he told Peter to throw his nets overboard in the deep water to catch some fish. Knowing that he had fished all night with no luck, Peter was hesitant, but he threw the nets overboard anyway. The nets were filled with so many fish that they began to tear, and Peter needed help to get the fish into the boat. It was so full that it began to sink (Luke 5). From that moment on Peter followed Jesus and became a leader among the disciples. Like Mary, Peter had been a teenager but neither an adolescent nor a TCK.

Both Mary and Peter knew about other cultures. In fact, Samaria was between Bethany (where Mary lived) and Galilee (where Peter lived). Although the Samaritans and Jews had a common ancestry, the Jews who lived in either side of them (like Mary and Peter) did not consider the Samaritans to be Jewish. In fact, when traveling between Bethany and Galilee, Jews tried to avoid going through Samaria—even if it took them a day longer to travel. Even though Mary and Peter were keenly aware of this culture, they had never lived in it. In fact, they often tried not even to pass through it. They were not TCKs.

## Teenagers were adults.

The dictionary defines a teenager as a person in his or her teens. Of course, the teens are the numbers between 13 and 19, so anyone 13-19 years old is a teenager. Jesus lived 33 years, so at one time he was 13 years old, 14 years old, and so forth. He was a teenager at one time in his life. However, adolescence had not yet been invented as a “stage” which children went through on their way to adulthood, so Jesus was never an adolescent. When his

childhood was over, he became an adult as shown by the following items.

- **Ceremonies.** Children became adults through ceremonies. *The Encyclopedia Judaica* notes that bar mitzvah literally means “son of the commandment” (and bat mitzvah means “daughter of the commandment”). At the age of 13 plus one day (12 plus one day for girls) the boy became a man, attaining religious and legal maturity so his vows were valid. Though the actual ceremony was not developed until much later, even during Jesus' time boys became men at this age. They could marry and participate fully in religious services, as well as buy and sell property.
- **Responsibility.** Jewish law fixed 13 as the age of responsibility for young men (12 for young women). Midrashic literature has many references to this as the turning point in a person's life, noting that at this age Abraham rejected the idols of his father. At this age Jacob and Esau went their separate ways (one to study Torah and one to idol worship). Talmudic literature notes that in Jerusalem during the period of the Second Temple, it was customary to bless persons who had completed their first fast day at 12 or 13. The father was responsible for his son's actions only until the boy turned 13.
- **Religious participation.** Reading from the Torah was the primary symbolic act showing that the boy had become a man. On the first occasion for reading the Torah after his thirteenth birthday according to the Jewish calendar, the young man did so. That was the first public demonstration of his new role as a man. When the boy's father read the Torah, he recited the benediction, “Blessed is he who has now freed me from the responsibility of this one.” The boy was now a man.
- **Bible passages.** Throughout both Old Testament times and New Testament times, people went from being children to being adults. Whether you read about Moses' development in Exodus 2 or Hebrews 11, you find that in one sentence

he is referred to as a child. In the next sentence he is referred to as being grown up. There was no intermediate stage of adolescence. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul referred to himself as a child three times in one sentence. He then began the next sentence with, “When I became a man...” Again there was no intermediate developmental stage of adolescence.

- **Marriage for Women.** One sure sign that people were considered adults was the minimum age at which they could legally marry. Of course, not everyone married at this minimum age, but it was strongly encouraged as seen in the following from the Talmud. “As had been taught: Do not profane thy daughter to cause her to be a whore: R. Akiba said: This refers to the delay in marrying off a daughter who is already a *bogareth*” (A footnote explains that since she has reached puberty, she may become unchaste if not married). “R. Kahana said: The only poor in Israel is the subtly wicked and he who delays in marrying off his daughter, a *bogareth*.” Another passage talking about the man who lived in peace and not sin states, “He who loves his wife as himself and honors her more than himself, and leads his children in the right path, and marries them just before they attain puberty—of him the scripture saith...” (Sanhedrin 76a-76b).
- **Marriage for men.** The Talmud also has similar passages about the young men. “R. Huna was thus in accordance with his views. For he said, He who is twenty years of age and is not married spends all his days in sin. ‘In sin’—can you really think so?—but say, spends all his days in sinful thoughts.” “As soon as one attains twenty and has not married, he exclaims, ‘blasted be his bones!’” “R. Hisda said: The reason that I am superior to my colleagues is that I married at sixteen. And had I married at fourteen, I would have said to Satan, ‘An arrow in your eye.’” (Kiddushin 29-b-30a).

- **Other cultures over thousands of years.** The minimum legal age for marriage (a mark of adulthood) remained at 12 for women and 13 or 14 for men until a century or two ago. One can trace these ages throughout the history of the western world, through Roman law, English law, and early American law. Again, remember that not everyone married at these ages, but they could legally do so. From pioneer Kentucky, “A marriage that sometimes united a boy of sixteen to a girl of fourteen was an occasion of merriment that brought out the whole fort.” “The girls of North Carolina married so early that grandmothers of twenty-seven years of age were frequently found.”
- **Work.** Not only could people marry, but they were expected to provide for themselves. A Massachusetts law about welfare in 1823 said, “They shall certify that no part of such account is for the support of any male person, over the age of twelve and under the age of sixty years, while of competent health to labor.” In his autobiography Andrew Carnegie wrote about when he was 15 years old, “And that is how in 1850 I got my first real start in life. From the dark cellar running a steam engine at two dollars a week, begrimed with coal dirt...into paradise, yes heaven, as it seemed to me, with newspapers, pens, pencils, and sunshine about me.” This, of course, was a promotion based on several years of adult work as a younger teenager.
- **Definition.** Adult comes to us from the Latin word *adultus* which is the past participle of *adolescere* from *ad* (to) and *olescere* (grow). It literally means the grown one. The dictionary defines an adult as a person grown to full size and strength, legally a person who has come of age. Thus, in summary, for several thousand years, people became adults legally at 12-14 years of age, or at least when they had their growth spurt and became full size people. They were expected to marry, to support themselves, and to be treated like any other adults.



Who is more qualified to understand this concept than cross-cultural workers and cross-cultural worker kids? Cross-cultural workers and their families are the ones most likely to actually live among people of other cultures and be able to enter into those ways of thinking. Of course, any family living in another country is able to observe different cultures, but most people in the military, diplomatic corps, or business are not as likely to live among the nationals as much as cross-cultural worker families are.

The fact is that most cultures of the world still treat teenagers as adults. It is only when western culture introduced the concept of adolescence that some cultures stopped holding teenagers responsible for their behavior. As the western concept of adolescence spreads around the globe, teens are no longer expected to act like adults, and they frequently do not do so.

Martha and Peter certainly went through their teen years, but during that time, they were adults, not adolescents. In addition, they lived their entire lives in the one culture, so they never became TCKs either.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

Act like adults. You are adults, and people your age have functioned as adults for thousands of years in many different cultures. You have the capacity to be responsible adults if you want to. Your parents may not be too keen on this idea, so ask them to try treating you as adults. Ask for more freedom and the responsibility that goes with it. Then show them that you can handle the freedom and responsibility.

You have heard the story of David and Goliath from the time you started Sunday school. The adults in David's life did not have as much confidence in him as they should have. When Samuel came to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be king, Jesse did not even bring David (the baby of the family) for Samuel to consider. When David offered to fight Goliath, King Saul said, "You are only a boy...." When David faced Goliath, the giant looked him

over, "saw that he was only a boy," and despised him. However, David had been functioning as an adult caring for the sheep and killing a lion and a bear barehanded. He was an adult, and he just needed a chance to prove it (1 Samuel 16-17).

If you blow it and act like a child, wait a few weeks and ask your parents for another chance. If you are not sure how you should act in a particular situation, ask your parents what to do. Consulting others never hurts—and it can often save you from failure and pain.

Of course, your actions depend on the host culture in which you grew up. Some countries have accepted adolescence as part of their overall culture. In that case, you will probably not experience this any differently from any other adolescent. However, in other countries teenagers are treated as adolescents in the larger cities but as adults in rural villages. In this case, you may feel some additional conflict as you feel like an adult in your village home, but like a child back in your passport country.

Many people from "modern" western cultures look at the rites of passage in "primitive" cultures as being puberty rites. Of course, they take place at the time of puberty, but they are really adulthood rites. In those cultures, puberty is a sign of adulthood, and the people going through the ceremonies are entering the culture with full adult status rather than going into a holding pattern waiting for the time to come when they will be treated as adults. If you live in this kind of culture, check your attitude toward it.

## Chapter 2

### Daniel & Esther: Teenagers and TCKs (but not Adolescents)

Living 500 or 600 years before Mary and Peter, Daniel and Esther were also teenagers, but they were third culture kids (TCKs) as well. Of course, they were 13, 14, ..., 18, and 19 years of age, so they were teenagers. In addition, during their developing years they lived at least part of the time in a culture other than that of their parents.

#### Daniel

Daniel became a TCK while still in school, probably as a teenager. He became a TCK when he went to boarding school in a neighboring country. Like most TCKs Daniel became one not by choice, but through decisions made by others. In Daniel's case it was the choice of strangers in another country, another culture which had overrun Daniel's passport country. The leader there decided to take some of the outstanding young men (including Daniel), educate them, and put them into government service (Daniel 1). Rather than trying to get into the school, Daniel went unwillingly because of heavy-handed "recruiting" techniques. He had not asked to go, nor did he want to go, nor did his parents want him there. Daniel was away from his parents and had no reliable way of keeping in contact with them—no email, no telephones, not even "snail-mail." However, he knew that his parents still loved him and were likely praying for him.

Fortunately, Daniel also found three other guys there from his passport country. He probably did not know them before they all wound up in school together, but TCKs have a way of finding each other. Even if they are not from the same country, TCKs have much in common and think alike, having grown up between cultures. They have even more in common if they have spent time in the same two cultures. Like many teens, Daniel and his friends had nicknames—but not ones like Spike, Bro, and Boomer. The dean of students probably thought they would fit in better if they had "local" names, so he gave them the following: Daniel became Belteshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshac and Azariah became Abednego. As usual, some of the names stuck and others did not. Daniel's did not stick (Daniel 1).

#### Esther

Esther was similar to Daniel in many ways. She was a member of the same minority group as Daniel, a group held in captivity. She lived in the same political situation as Daniel, only years later. Daniel may have even still been alive, but if so, he was a very old man by the time Esther was brought to the capital city. She also got caught up in a very sensitive and explosive political situation. Like Daniel and his friends, she had names from both her passport culture and her host culture. The name on her passport would have been Hadassah, but she was known in the host culture as Esther, probably from the Babylonian word for goddess, or the Persian word for star (Esther 2).

Unlike Daniel, Esther did not have the loving support of her parents. In fact, her parents were dead. She was an orphan, apparently with no close family members. When her parents died, it was her cousin Mordecai who took her in and cared for her as if she were his own daughter. Mordecai was from her passport country, but he was a government official in her host country. Mordecai at least knew of Daniel, and perhaps he knew Daniel personally. Rather than being brought into the culture as a

teenager, Esther was raised in the host culture, probably born while her parents were living there (Esther 2).

Esther was really attractive—the Bible says she “was lovely in form and features.” She had a beautiful face and a good figure. When she walked down the street or into a room, all eyes, especially those of the men, were on her. However, by order of the king of her host country, Esther suddenly found herself removed from her cousin’s home and living in the palace. In fact, she was in the king’s harem. She was brought to the king not because of her ability, but because of her beauty. Although she was sexually attractive, Esther was not promiscuous. She was still a virgin, and everyone knew it (Esther 2).

### What is a TCK?

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are people who have spent considerable time during their developmental years living in at least one culture other than that of their parents. They assimilate elements from two or more cultures; however, they do not feel like they fully fit into any of those cultures. They feel like they belong with other TCKs who have had the same experience of growing up between worlds.

- **Becoming TCKs.** People may become TCKs because their parents serve as cross-cultural workers, serve in the military, serve in the diplomatic corps, live overseas to do business, and so forth. They may become TCKs because they chose to become exchange students themselves. The reason for their living in the other culture makes no difference, but the depth of their immersion does. If they just live in a compound, on a base, or on embassy row, they may be there for years and not absorb parts of the host culture because they interact only with people of their passport culture. However, they may be there only a few months living with a family and become TCKs because they are immersed deeply in the culture.

- **Shared Characteristics.** Although TCKs do not live as a group, they share similar values, beliefs, and ways of thinking. So they immediately recognize other TCKs when they meet and have serious conversations. I overheard three or four in conversation in which one said, “She may have lived in Africa for a year, but she’s not a TCK—she doesn’t think like one.” The others all agreed. It makes no difference if one is from North America living in Asia, another from South America living in Europe, and yet another from Australia living in Africa—they all develop similar basic ways of thinking and immediately recognize each other.
- **Time.** If the difference is not just living in another culture, what is the crucial difference? Time in the host culture is necessary, but it cannot be specified in terms of weeks, months, or years. Some become TCKs in a few months; others may live in that culture several years and never become TCKs. The crucial thing is that the person gets beyond “vacation mode” (functioning as an observer) and into “living mode” (functioning as a part of the culture). Living in her host culture with her guardian working in the government, Esther certainly assimilated the culture around her. Daniel arrived in his host culture much later in life, but the Bible specifies that he studied the language and literature of his host culture and was specifically preparing for government service there.
- **Timing.** Although the time lived in the culture varies, the timing does not. The time spent in the other culture must be during the developmental years when culture is being internalized, becoming a part of the individual. This is usually during the first 16 or 18 years of life. After an entire culture is assimilated, it is very unusual for adults to actually assimilate parts of a different culture. They can study the new culture, learn many facts about it, and appreciate it; however that culture does not become a part of them personally. Esther entered her host culture as a

small child. Perhaps she was even born while her parents lived there and never lived in her “passport culture.” Daniel entered his host culture much later, but while he was still in school.

Further evidence of their internalizing their host cultures is that both Daniel and Esther had different names given them by people in their two cultures. Today most people know Daniel by the name given in his passport culture, but they know Esther by the name given in her host culture. Of course, most people today know Daniel’s three close friends by the names given in their host culture (Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego). Regardless of which name we know them by, all of them actually had two names reflecting their identities in both cultures.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

Remember that each generation grows up under different sets of circumstances. People born about 1925 grew up during the great depression and a world war. Those experiences left an indelible impression on them. Those born about 1945 grew up in a time of unparalleled prosperity and the threat of nuclear attack. Those born about 1965 grew up in a time of a war and changing morality. You are growing up in a time of great financial uncertainty and the constant threat of terrorism like your parents and grandparents never faced. Be tolerant of their differences.

Realize that you are different from you parents in more ways than most other adolescents are different from their parents. You have not only the generational differences, but also the differences that come from internalizing several cultures. Read about TCKs. The best book available on the topic is *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds* by David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken, published jointly by Intercultural Press ([www.interculturalpress.com](http://www.interculturalpress.com)) and Nicholas Brealey Publishing ([www.nbrealey-books.com](http://www.nbrealey-books.com)). It is for sale in many bookstores and online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and other sites. This book will help you understand yourself.

## **Part 2**

### **Adolescence Invented**

Between the middle of the eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century many changes took place. Living conditions changed, definitions changed, and laws changed. As a result teenagers, treated as adults for thousands of years, began being treated as children. Western culture created a new “stage” of development which had never existed before.

Adolescence is still so new that most languages do not have words to refer to it. In English an adult female is a woman. A child female is a girl. What is an adolescent female? A “gal?” The dictionary says that is informal for “girl.” In English an adult male is a man. A child male is a boy. What is an adolescent male? A “guy?” The dictionary says that is slang for “boy.” When you address a group of teenagers as “guys and gals,” you are calling them boys and girls.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 show how adolescence was created so that we now treat teenagers as children rather than as the adults they are.

## Chapter 3

### Martha & Mark: Teenagers, TCKs, and Adolescents

Living about 1900 years after Mary and Peter, Martha and Mark were also teenagers and third culture kids (TCKs). However, they lived in twentieth century western culture, so they were adolescents as well. Because they were 13, 14, . . . , 18, and 19 years of age, they were teenagers. During their developing years they lived many years in a culture other than their parents' passport culture, so they were TCKs. Their passport culture was twentieth century United States of America after western culture had invented adolescence.

Martha and Mark were not their well-known namesakes mentioned in the Bible. However, their parents chose those names in honor of those two people mentioned in the Bible. Both Martha's parents and Mark's parents were cross-cultural workers who began their cross-cultural worker service in the early 1940s. Martha and Mark were my cousins. Martha and I shared a set of grandparents on my mother's side. Mark and I shared a set of great-grandparents on my father's side.

#### Martha

Martha's parents were called to be cross-cultural workers in Africa, but war was brewing across the Atlantic in Europe. To avoid those hostilities, in the spring of 1941 they set sail on the Zamzam, a neutral Egyptian passenger ship heading south along

the coast of South America. When the captain thought they were finally far enough south to be out of danger, he turned the Zamzam east across the Atlantic heading around the Horn of Africa. However, on April 17, 1941, a German warship hit the Zamzam with 55 shells, and the ship sank within a matter of hours. Picked up by the very ship that had sunk them, not one of the 144 cross-cultural workers and 33 TCKs on board was lost. They spent 32 days on another German ship that dropped them off in Occupied France after running the British blockade.

After the war, Martha and her parents made it to the heart of Africa where she grew up with Burundi as her host culture. She and her four siblings grew up between America and Africa, first crossing the Atlantic by ship, and later flying between her two cultures. She returned to the USA to stay only when she went to college, as is the case with so many TCKs. However, since it was the mid-twentieth century, Martha was not only a teenager and a TCK, but she was also an adolescent.

#### Mark

Mark's parents were called to be cross-cultural workers in Asia. To reach Asia they set sail across the Pacific in the fall of 1941. Although war made travel across the Atlantic very dangerous, reaching Asia across the Pacific seemed possible. Rumors circulated about potential problems in the Pacific, but that region of the world seemed, like its name, peaceful. They were making good progress in crossing the ocean planning to stop in Hawaii as so many ships did. They sailed into Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the very day that Japan had attacked it! Though unharmed by the Japanese attack, their way to where God had called them was blocked.

Mark and his parents later made it to Asia where he grew up with India as his host culture. He and his brother grew up between America and Asia; first crossing the Pacific by ship and later flying between his cultures. He also returned to the USA to stay only when he went to college. However, since it was the mid-

twentieth century, like Martha, Mark was not only a teenager and a TCK, but he was also an adolescent.

What had changed that both Martha and Mark were now adolescents? What had happened was that between the middle of the nineteenth and the middle of the twentieth century western culture had invented adolescence. This new “stage” of development was a cultural creation.

### What is an adolescent?

The dictionary defines an adolescent as a boy or girl between childhood and adulthood, the period of life between puberty and maturity. Adolescent comes to us from the Latin word *adolescencia*, which is from *adolescens*, which is the present participle of *adolescere* from *ad* (to) and *olescere* (grow). So, adolescent literally means the growing one.

When people come to a lot of Latin words and grammatical terms like “present participle,” they tend to skip over all that “technical stuff.” If you did that with the last paragraph, go back and take a close look at it.

Yes, please go back and look at the Latin!

Does it sound familiar?

It should—(unless you skipped over a similar paragraph in the first chapter)!

Those sentences are from the first chapter:

Adult comes from the Latin word *adultus* which is the past participle of *adolescere* from *ad* (to) and *olescere* (grow). So adult literally means the grown one.

Look at that! Although they appear to be very different in English, adolescent and adult both come from the same Latin root. The only difference is that adolescent is the present participle and adult is the past participle. An adolescent is a “growing one” and an adult is a “grown one!” For the Romans, adolescents were people in their growth spurts and adults were people who had finished their growth spurts—even if they were still teenagers.

Does that mean that Jesus (and Mary, and Peter, and everyone who lived then) were adolescents? Yes, if you use the literal definition, that they had growth spurts. For about a year they would have been called adolescents, and when their growth spurt was over they would have been called adults. However, adolescence no longer means only that time of rapid growth. Its meaning has changed radically.

### Changes, changes, changes!

Several changes took place between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century.

- Puberty originally defined. If puberty marks the end of childhood (which everyone agrees it does), what does puberty mean? Take one more look at the Latin root! Puberty comes to us from the Latin *pubertas* which means “of ripe age, adult.” Look at that! Puberty literally means the beginning of adulthood.
- Definition of puberty changed. Just as the meaning of adolescence has changed, so has the meaning of puberty. Today the dictionary defines puberty as the age of sexual maturity, the age at which people are capable of having children. It is now the beginning of adolescence, not the beginning of adulthood. The dictionary goes on to say that the law generally fixes the age of puberty at 14 in the male and 12 in the female—about the ages at which the Talmud stated people could marry. Does that mean that Jesus (and Mary, and Peter, and everyone who lived then) went through puberty? Of course, they did. That was the end of their childhood. However, rather than entering into our culturally created stage of adolescence, they entered into adulthood because they were “of ripe age, adult.” As noted in the first chapter, they could marry, participate as adults in religious ceremonies, and were held legally responsible for their behavior. They were adults and no longer children.

- Age of puberty changed. The meaning of adolescence has changed. The meaning of puberty has changed. Has anything else changed? Yes, the average age at which puberty occurs changed between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. Reviewing more than 200 studies including more than 200,000 women over a period of nearly 200 years, two individuals at Harvard Medical School (Grace Wyshak and Rose Frisch, “Evidence for a Secular Trend in Age of Menarche,” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, April 29, 1982, pp. 1033-1035) found a dramatic change in the age at which women in the western world began menstruating. Of the 65 studies before 1880, not a single one found an average age below 14.5. Of the 24 studies done since 1950, only one found an average age above 14.5. The same thing has happened in men. When Bach was choirmaster in Leipzig more than 200 years ago, boys sang soprano until they were about 17; today their voices change at 13 or 14.
- Age of adulthood changed. The meaning of adolescence has changed. The meaning of puberty has changed. The average age at which puberty occurs has changed. Has anything else changed? Yes, the final change that created adolescence was the change at which people are considered adults. As noted in the first chapter, before adolescence was invented people were considered adults at 12 and 14 (for women and men) and could marry and work and were expected to provide for themselves and their families. Those ages did not change over a 3000 year period. The changes have taken place only during the last 200 years. Today in western culture people are often not allowed to marry and work until they are at least 18 years of age. Just as the age of puberty was dropping, the legal age of adulthood was increasing.  
If adolescence is defined as the time between puberty and adulthood, that time did not exist until the last two centuries.

People went from childhood to adulthood at the age of puberty, so there was no time between them. The changes in the age of puberty and the age of adulthood that created adolescence are shown in Figure 1.

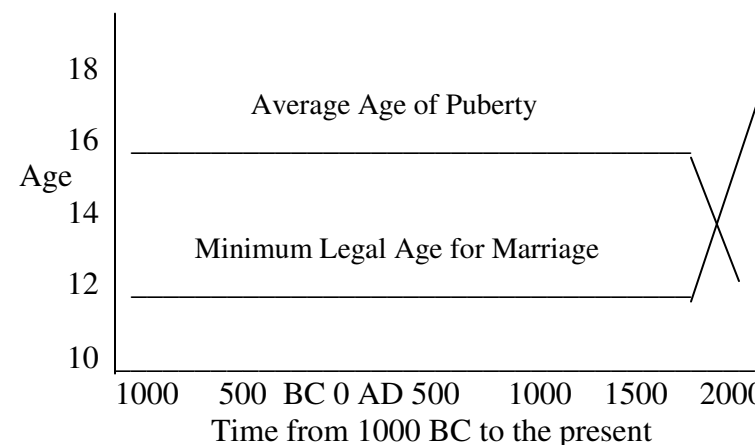


Figure 1. The invention of adolescence during the last two centuries

Defined as the time between puberty and adulthood, adolescence simply did not exist before 1850. People became adults at about the age of puberty, so they went directly from childhood to adulthood at that time. Only with the combination of the decrease in the age of puberty and the increase of the age at which people became adults do we have modern adolescence.

### What can adolescent TCKs do?

You, as adolescents (really adults), have been changed into “children” by your culture. People your age in the past (until 150 years ago) were full adult members of their cultures, but you are required to remain dependent “children.” Of course, this makes little logical sense, but you are powerless to change your culture right now. Talk it over with your parents and develop ways to

handle this situation in your own family, and perhaps talk it over with others in your organization and/or church as well.

Ask your parents and others in your agency to treat you as adults, to hold you responsible for whatever you do. If you act like adults, they will continue to treat you as adults. However, if you do not act responsibly, they will stop treating you as adults. If/When that happens, accept it and begin acting responsibly even though they are treating you as children. When you have proven to them that you are acting as adults, ask them to give you another chance to be adults.

If you have lived in a culture where adolescence has not yet been incorporated, you probably find this chapter easier to understand than those who have lived in only one culture. That is a distinct advantage you have. Your parents also have a broader view of development in other cultures, so you should find it easier to work out a compromise with them.

## Chapter 4

### Cognitive Maturity

It is obvious to everyone that physical changes take place about the time children become adolescents. Everyone notices the sudden growth spurt that takes place as children become adolescents. New clothing bought in late summer for the coming school year becomes too small by second semester. Voices change, becoming deeper. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the body changes in many ways as people pass through puberty and become sexually mature.

At about the same time intellectual changes take place as well. As children become teenagers, they notice that their parents have changed. As children they may have thought that Daddy was the strongest man in the world and that Mommy was the most beautiful woman in the world. As children perhaps they thought that their church, school, and country were the best in the world. As they became adolescents, they began to realize that Mom and Dad are pretty average, and they have some pretty serious faults. In addition they see that their pastor, teacher, and even their President have some flaws too.

Parents notice changes in their offspring as well. When the children were younger, your parents realized that their children did not obey every time, but at least they obeyed much of the time. Now that the children are adolescents parents may wonder why they always ask, "Why should I?" Or they ask, "What if I refuse?" As children they used to obey without asking for a reason, but now as adolescents they may not only ask for a reason but also argue



about most reasons the parents give. As one parent put it, “They argue just for the sake of arguing!”

What has happened? Of course, part of it is the cultural invention of adolescence, but another part of it is the changes that have taken place in intellectual development at about the age of puberty. In the New Testament we find recognition of these changes.

### Paul

Thousands of years ago people realized that these cognitive changes took place. Paul, a New Testament TCK, wrote, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (1 Corinthians 13:11). Nearly 2000 years ago Paul could see that speech, thinking, and reasoning are different during childhood and adulthood. When people changed into adults, their intellectual process changed along with their physical characteristics. In more recent times, studies have identified these.

### Piaget: Formal Operations

Although Paul wrote about it 2000 years ago, the modern study of the differences between the thinking of children and that of adults was pioneered by Jean Piaget in the early twentieth century. He studied several stages during cognitive development:

- Sensory motor, in which infants “think” using sensations and actions,
- Preoperational, in which preschool children represent things with words and images but are unable to think logically,
- Concrete operational, in which elementary children can think logically about concrete events, but they cannot think abstractly,
- Formal operational, in which middle and high school adolescents can reason abstractly.

Of course, the change of interest here is the final one which occurs at about the age of puberty, about as children become adolescents. In this stage, for the first time as adolescents, individuals are capable of thinking abstractly. Before this they had to have some concrete representation of the problem to solve it, but now they can think about it in words or other symbols alone. Now they can solve algebraic problems such as, “If  $X^2 - X - 6 = 0$ , what is  $X$ ?” Before the stage of formal operations, as children they just look puzzled when asked that question (For a child  $X$  is  $X$  and not something else.). When parents or teachers told them that  $X$  is  $-2$  and  $+3$ , the children thought they were joking ( $X$  could not be two things because  $X$  is  $X$ ). How then does this apply to you and your parents?

### Logical Reasoning

Since some people never reach this level of development, parents should be delighted when their children reach it. However, sometimes parents resent some of the results of this kind of thinking, and they may even interpret these results as rebellion.

- Parents find that, “Because I said so” does not work any more. Up until this time when as children you asked “Why?” you were satisfied with such an answer. However, now that you are capable of logical reasoning, you want to hear rational answers to your questions. No longer are you content with, “Because we have always done it that way.”
- Parents may also notice that as adolescents you seem to want to argue just for the sake of arguing. Of course, you do. When you were children and were first able to do something, you loved doing it. When you were first able to walk, you just walked for the sake of walking. When you learned to drive as a teenager, you wanted to drive just for the sake of driving (cruising). Likewise, when you learn to argue, you may argue just for the sake of arguing.
- Unfortunately, your logical reasoning is imperfect. You have the capacity to reason abstractly, but that capacity

needs to be developed. Odd as it may sound, your parents need to teach you, as adolescents, how to argue appropriately and effectively. As adolescents you need to learn to stick to the issue and remain calm rather than making angry personal attacks on other people. Your parents need to teach you how to construct logical arguments and present them appropriately.

Above all, your parents must not rush to the judgment that questioning and arguing indicates that you are rebellious. As adolescents you may be rebelling—or you may just be showing that you have reached your full cognitive capacity and need practice developing that new ability to its fullest potential. If teens are not rebellious but parents tag them with that label, the teenagers may become rebellious—a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **Imagined Perfection**

Another result of this new cognitive capacity is the ability to imagine an “ideal” in ways never before possible. When you construct these utopian ideals as adolescents, reality does not measure up very well, and your comments may be interpreted as lack of respect. You may make these comparisons in many areas.

- **Parents.** As children you may have seen your parents as perfect, but when you compare your parents to your constructed ideal, your parents always come up short. When you say so, your parents may think you are rebelling.
- **Church.** As children you may have thought that your church was flawless, perhaps that only its members were going to heaven. Now you compare the church you attend to your ideal church, and you may want to change churches or not go at all.
- **School.** As elementary school children you may have loved your school, especially your teachers. In comparison to your ideal school and teachers, as adolescents you will find that reality comes up short so you dislike school and may not even want to go.

- **Country.** As children you may have loved your passport country and prized its political system. Compared to your imagined “perfect” country, as adolescents you may find that your passport country looks very bad, and you may explore other forms of government.

All of this may be very disconcerting to parents, but it is a part of growing up and developing the capacity to think like adults. Rather than labeling adolescents as disrespectful, parents should help them develop a more realistic Christian world-view. The ability to imagine perfection (heaven) is an important one, and it needs cultivation rather than criticism.

### **Postmodern Thinking**

Postmodern thought is not a part of adolescence; however, during the past couple of decades, it has become the way many adolescents think. “Postmodern” does not mean that such thinking developed out of modernism but means only that it developed after modernism. This kind of thinking probably developed partly as a reaction against the great pride modernism had in its ability to create perfect citizens in a perfect society. This kind of postmodern thought is a challenge not only to Christian thought but also to the rational thought of modernism.

Such changes in patterns of thought soon after reaching adulthood have been occurring for thousands of years and have been a two-stage process. The first stage is one in which the old ways of thinking are challenged, and that is good for each generation to do. Then the second stage is one of creating a deeper understanding of truth acknowledging God rather than leaning on one’s own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6).

TCKs often challenge the patterns of thought in both their host culture and their passport culture. We find examples of this in TCKs born in their host cultures in both Old and New Testaments. More than 3000 years ago Moses chose the ways of thinking in his passport culture (the Hebrew world-view) and rejected those of his host culture (Exodus 2; Hebrews 11:23-28). As the writer of

Hebrews put it, “he chose to be mistreated along with the people of God.” About 2000 years ago Paul rejected the patterns of thought in both his passport and host cultures and chose to follow Jesus Christ (Acts 9). As he put it in his trial before the king, he had lived as the strictest of Jews (a Pharisee), but because of his hope in Jesus Christ he was arrested.

Unfortunately, many postmodern adolescents today take the position that there is no general truth and that each person creates his or her own truth. They have not taken the necessary second step. Like other Christians who grew up during the age of modernism, cross-cultural worker parents are often disturbed when they hear this kind of postmodern thought from their children. Two examples of the characteristics of such thought are found in truth and tolerance.

- **Truth.** Christians and modernists alike believe that there is one truth, and that we can discover it. Christians believe it is revealed to us by God, and modernists believe that it can be found by observation and reason. Some of today’s postmodernists believe that truth is a product of each person and his or her culture. Thus each person constructs his or her own truth and reality. Rather than one truth, there are many truths. Furthermore, all of these truths are of equal value so that what they find in the Bible is as valid as what they find on the Internet or as what their friend says.
- **Tolerance.** Since there is no one (absolute) truth for some of today’s postmodernists, they treat all truths with tolerance. And for them tolerance means that we must equally affirm all truths as valid. Christianity is truth. Buddhism is truth. What their friend believes is truth. All these truths are equally valid. A cardinal “sin” in this form of postmodernism is to say that your truth is better than another person’s truth. Of course, you are an arrogant bigot if you maintain that you have the only truth.

A postmodern student in a Christian college said, “Still, however, I am told that refusal to maintain faith in this invisible

character will result in eternal damnation. At least if I let myself down, I won’t spend an eternity in pain and suffering. Christianity, at this point, seems more intolerant and judgmental than any ideology I wish to be associated with.” This person is saying that if he does not believe in hell, he will not go to it because it does not exist. However, if he believes in it, he risks going to it.

### **Thinking Like a TCK**

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) who grow up as a part of two cultures internalize deep aspects of culture that influence their thinking. Everyone notices differences in appearance, words used, customs, and ways of doing things in different cultures. However, much deeper and more important are the unseen beliefs, values, assumptions, and modes of thought in different cultures. TCKs are aware of these deeply held cognitive factors. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, we have heard TCKs sit around our table and say, “She may have lived overseas, but she doesn’t think like a TCK.” Other TCKs agree.

Although she used the word “values” rather than thinking, Deborah Kartheiser (“Value Shock,” *Interact*, Winter, 2004) wrote about these deeply internalized cultural factors that affect thinking.

- “The tension arises from the strange mix of cultural values that still lives in my very core. (p. 1)
- “It is not an us-and-them mentality; it is more like us-and-us-and-us and-us. (p. 2)
- “Then there are the inner clashes, when the values of one of my cultures seem to contradict those of another. (p. 18)
- “Am I a turncoat by identifying so deeply with one group, then going back and forth to the other camp where I am also one of us?” (p. 19)

Learning a language and a culture the way TCKs do, by living in it during their developing years, means not only learning words but also internalizing a set of concepts and a way of thinking unique to that culture. Learning two languages and two cultures

simultaneously may result in a distinctly different way of thinking which becomes apparent during the adolescent years when logical reasoning is used to support arguments.

### What can adolescents TCKs do?

Your memory and capacity to think will never be better than it is during your late adolescence. Do not miss this opportunity to use your intellect.

- Don't avoid teachers because someone says they are hard.
- Do avoid teachers that give "busy work" and seek those who make you think.
- Don't major in something just because it is easy, such as the language of you host country.
- Do major in something because it interests you and is useful.
- Don't accept something simply because it is in a book or because others believe it.
- Do reach some conclusions about how you will determine truth.
- Have your parents read this chapter (even better this whole book) and suggest the following to them.

**To parents of adolescents:** This is an exciting time of life intellectually for you and your teenagers. You can now interact with them on an adult level. Unfortunately, parents may misinterpret their adolescents' new cognitive abilities as rebellion.

- Don't be surprised or angry when adolescents want to argue.
- Do be thankful that they have developed the capacity for abstract thinking.
- Don't reprimand adolescents who ask, "Why?"
- Do be a model of how to give a good answer to the question, "Why?"
- Don't tell adolescents that their reasoning is not logical.

- Do help them present a logical argument that will be more convincing.
- Don't be surprised when adolescents notice your shortcomings
- Do expect it and help them develop a realistic view to temper their idealism

As a TCK you have a unique set of intellectual processes, having incorporated two or more ways of thinking. Use these abilities to work on problems that are difficult for those who have grown up in only one culture.

## Chapter 5

### Moral Maturity

Everyone notices that physical changes take place about the time children become adolescents. In the last chapter, we saw that intellectual changes also take place at the same time. As individuals enter Piaget's stage of formal operations and are able to think abstractly, they become capable of making new kinds of moral judgments as well. Children are not able to make their judgments of what is right and wrong on the same bases as adults, and we do not expect them to do so. However, at about the age of puberty, we should expect them to make more responsible moral judgments. Many changes have taken place, and these changes have clear implications.

#### In Bible Times

As we saw in Chapter 1, in Bible times teenagers were adults. At ages of 12 and 13, children became adults and they were held legally and morally responsible. Teenagers were considered to be adults not only in society, but before God. They participated fully in religious ceremonies and were accountable to God for their actions, right or wrong. At the end of the first time his son read from the Torah, the father recited the benediction, "Praise the Lord! I am not responsible for this teenager!" (That is my contemporary translation of "Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this one." *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972, p. 244).

#### Kohlberg

Building on the work of Jean Piaget (studied cognitive maturity, mentioned in the last chapter), Lawrence Kohlberg presented moral dilemmas to children, adolescents, and adults. He then asked them not only what they would do to solve the dilemmas but also why they chose that solution. He was more interested in the reasons for their decisions than in what they said they would do. Kohlberg concluded that moral reasoning, like thinking, develops from the concrete to the abstract through different stages as we mature.

- Preconventional morality. In early childhood children have a morality of self-interest in which they seek to gain rewards and avoid punishments.
- Conventional morality. In later childhood moral reasoning usually shifts to obeying laws and rules simply because they are laws and rules.
- Postconventional morality. During adolescence as they develop formal operational thinking, teens become capable of moral reasoning based on human rights and basic ethical principles.

Of course, the change we are interested in here is the final one which occurs near the age of puberty, about as teenagers become adolescents. During this stage they are, for the first time, capable of making moral decisions based on ethical principles. Before that children simply found an existing rule or law that seemed relevant to the situation at hand, but now they are able to apply general principles to new situations.

Just as not everyone reaches the cognitive stage of formal operational thinking, not everyone reaches the level of postconventional morality. In fact, reaching this level is most common in the male educated middle class of western culture, one which prizes individualism. Women and people in communal cultures that prize caring relationships are not as likely to apply such impersonal moral principles. This not to say that such people are unable to apply these principles, just that since they value

relationships more, they are less likely to apply the abstract principles.

Again we find that adolescents are capable of adult levels of moral reasoning. They are adults. Whether we hold them responsible for their moral choices or not, they are capable of making such choices.

### **Right or Wrong?**

Adolescents are capable of making these kinds of moral choices, just as they can think abstractly at the level of formal operations. However, many do not do so because of their postmodern thinking. Just as each one decides which will be true or false for him or her, so each one decides what is right or wrong for him or her. Rather than looking for an absolute truth (right and wrong for everyone), each postmodern adolescent develops his or her moral system of what is right or wrong.

This thinking is not new. The writer of Proverbs dealt with it thousands of years ago. He noted that the ways of fools seem right to them (Proverbs 12:15) and people's ways may seem right to them, but God is the one who judges (Proverbs 16:2). People's ways may seem right to them, but the end is death. The Bible nowhere says that each person should develop his or her own moral system. In fact Paul, the TCK, says that those who compare with themselves and measure themselves by themselves are not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Even when a whole culture determines right and wrong, the results may be far from Christian. In his book, *Peace Child*, cross-cultural worker Don Richardson described a tribe in which the most admired act a man can do was to pretend to be a friend to someone from another tribe, have that "friend" over to dinner, and stab him to death during the meal. The longer he pretended to be a friend, the more admiration from other members of the tribe! In their culture Judas was greatly admired because he had pretended to be Jesus' friend for three years, longer than anyone they had ever known. In western culture all of us know about the Nazis in

Germany who decided that killing Jews was a virtuous act, so they killed six million.

The most comprehensive recent treatment of morality in modern adolescents is Josh McDowell's *Right from Wrong* (1994). As the cover notes, this study found that a majority of church youth could no longer determine right from wrong. McDowell was interested in what adolescents attending church youth groups believed was right and wrong, so he enlisted the help of the Barna Research Group and surveyed 3795 youth members in 13 Evangelical Christian denominations (Assembly of God, two Church of God groups, Church of the Nazarene, Foursquare Gospel, Free Methodist, Friends, two Mennonite groups, Pentecostal Holiness, Salvation Army, Southern Baptist, and Wesleyan). Here are some of their answers relative to their beliefs and piety.

- 86% Yes to: Have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today?
- 85% Yes to: God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today.
- 82% Weekly to: How often do you and others in your life attend services at a Christian church?
- 80% Yes to: There really is a place of permanent suffering, which is known as hell.
- 75% Yes to: When I die I will go to heaven because I have confessed my sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.
- 70% Yes to: The Bible is totally accurate in all its teachings.

The report of this study is 335 pages long, so some results serve as examples here. As you look at these, remember that the results given are not by adolescents in general, but by adolescents in youth groups of these Evangelical Christian churches. Here are some of their answers to questions about their moral behaviors.

- 71% Yes to: What is right for one person in a given situation might not be right for another person who encounters that same situation.

- 66% Yes to: I lied to a parent, teacher, or other older person (in the last three months).
- 59% Yes to: I lied to one of my friends or peers (in the last three months).
- 54% Yes to: Freedom means being able to do anything you want to do, as long as it is legal.
- 48% Yes to: When it comes to matters of morals and ethics, truth means different things to different people; no one can be absolutely positive they have the truth.
- 38% Yes to: Lying is sometimes necessary.
- 36% Yes to: I cheated on an exam or other evaluation.

Keep in mind that these are not statements made by a random sample of today's youth. They are made by adolescents who attend Evangelical Christian churches, and 86% have made personal commitments to Jesus Christ, commitments still important to them.

### What can adolescent TCKs do?

You face many moral decisions every day. You are adults and have the ability to make adult decisions. The only way to learn to make such decisions is to make them—and then live with the consequences of those decisions. Look at some of the decisions you may have to make on a regular basis.

- When a TV program comes on, it is often a moral decision: to watch or not to watch.
- When a song comes on the radio, it may be a moral decision: to listen or not to listen.
- When you drive: to speed or not to speed.
- When riding with someone driving recklessly: to continue or to get out.
- When you approach a yellow traffic light: to accelerate or to brake.
- When invited to a questionable party: to accept or decline.

- When alcohol comes out at a party: to drink or pass. To stay or leave.
- When you see an injustice done: to get involved or to “mind your own business.”
- During the offering at church: to donate cheerfully or to keep your money.
- When at work: to return when the break ends or to stand and talk longer.
- When on the job: to do your best or say “minimum pay, minimum work.”
- When taking a test at school: to peek at your neighbor's paper or take the lower grade.
- When you see someone cheating: to confront or to turn your head.
- When given too much change at the register: to keep it or to return it.
- When on a date: to respect the other person or get all you can get.
- Etc. etc. etc.

Look back over the list of situations above. When you faced these, how did you do? Think of other moral decisions you have faced during the last week. How many did you pass? How many fail? What do you do about the wrong moral decisions you have made?

- Ask God's forgiveness. This is always appropriate.
- Resolve not to make that wrong choice again—and carry out that resolution. You cannot “unwatch” the suggestive TV program you saw last night, but you can change the channel or turn the TV off tonight.
- If you habitually make the same wrong choice, ask someone to hold you accountable and report to that person every week—and call them between times when in that situation.
- If possible and appropriate, ask the forgiveness of others involved. If you did something inappropriate with your

date last weekend, ask him or her for forgiveness—and do not do it again.

- If possible, make restitution. If you did not tithe, you can make it up next week—or in small payments over the next year. If you took long breaks, work some overtime or shorten future breaks.

Making good moral choices takes practice. The more you make good choices, the more likely that you will make good ones in the future. Do not give up, but continue to ask forgiveness and ask others to help.

## Chapter 6

### Really Adults?

By this time you may be thinking, “I can see that teenagers have been adults throughout most of history. I know the research shows that they are capable of adult thinking and moral decisions. But, in general, I just do not see teens acting like adults. Are they really adults? If so, why don’t they act like it?”

Teenagers functioned as adults for thousands of years. By definition, people become adults sexually at puberty. They are adults in other ways physically as well. Of course, there are some physical variations in adults over the lifespan, but they are basically very similar. To get some idea of when people become adults physically, you might look at the dosages recommended for some of the non-prescription drugs in the medicine cabinet, drugs you probably have taken.

#### Pain Relievers

- Aspirin (Bayer)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)

#### Antidiarrheals

- Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)
- Loperamide Hydrochloride (Imodium A-D)

#### Allergy/Decongestants

- Diphenhydramine HCl (Benadryl, Benadryl-D)
- Pseudoephedrine HCl (Sudafed, Benadryl-D)



All of these have dosages for “Adults and children 12 years of age and over” or for “Adults” (with a warning not to give to children under 12). Even the pharmaceutical companies treat teenagers as adults physically in terms of the over-the-counter medicines.

In previous chapters we have seen that people become adults cognitively and morally at about the age of puberty as well. If they really are adults, why aren't they treated as adults, and why don't they act like it? To answer this question, we need to go back nearly two centuries.

### **The Disease of Precocity**

As the age of puberty began to decline and cognitive maturity occurred earlier, people noticed that children were capable of adult-like thought at earlier ages. In 1832 Amariah Brigham said, “Precocious maturity of the mind is nearly always a disease.” That is, people who could think like adults at an earlier age than the previous generation were thought to be sick.

The July 15, 1843, issue of *Common School Journal* said, “If a child exhibits any symptoms of precocity, it should be taken immediately from books and permitted to ramble and play in the open air, or engage in manual labor.” That is, children who are ahead of the others in their thinking may be getting sick, and teachers should take away their books and send them out to recess or give them a craft to do.

Today we would call these “gifted” children and place them in accelerated programs, but as adolescence was being invented, people “trembled” for their precocious children. The newly created adolescents were kept from maturing too rapidly. Some said about them, “Early ripe, early rot.”

No parents wanted their children to have this disease which was associated with everything from tuberculosis to insanity. In 1881 in the *American Public Health Association: Papers and Reports*, Charles Folsom had a paper titled “The Prevention of Insanity.” In it he said, “In boyhood and girlhood comes first the

dangers from confinement in the bad air of school-rooms, and the hurry and worry and strain of six, seven, or eight branches of study, competitive examinations, prizes, want of out-door exercise, insufficient time for meals, evening study, morning languor, and, after a few years, the break-down with which so many of us are already too familiar.” That is, school can drive you crazy.

The desire to slow development lasted more than a century and is still held by many today. An article by Bernice Berk in 1988 in *Good Housekeeping* was titled “Help! At 11 She's Already a Teenager: Why kids grow up so fast and how to slow the pace.” In 1984 in a chapter in *Parents & Teenagers*, written for Christian parents, Larry Richards said, “With my own teens I felt that slowing down adolescence was a positive thing and so I very consciously insulated my teens from the fast pace of growth that adolescent culture assumes.” To slow their adolescence, he did not let them get their driver's licenses until they were 18.

### **Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**

Just as people 200 years ago (or 2000 years ago) accepted the “fact” that teenagers should act like adults, people today accept the “fact” that teenagers should act like children. Centuries ago teenagers were told that they were mature and responsible, and they acted like adults. Today teenagers are told that they are immature and irresponsible, and they act like children. In the 1960's psychologist Robert Rosenthal conducted many experiments showing that people (even animals) behave as others expect them to. This occurs even when the people holding the expectations do not intend to influence the others.

Rosenthal and Jacobson titled their 1968 book *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. They gave the students in an elementary school a test that was supposed to pick out “late bloomers.” Then they randomly picked out about 20% of the students and told the teachers that these 20% would show remarkable intellectual growth during the next eight months. As you might expect, eight months later the grades of the “late bloomers” were higher. In

addition, the teachers said they were more interesting, curious, happy, appealing, adjusted and affectionate than the other students in the class. However, not only did their grades go up but also their scores on objective intelligence tests were higher at the end of that year.

For thousands of years people expected teenagers to be mature and responsible adults, and they were. Now we expect them to be immature and irresponsible children, and they are. Then we tell them they cannot be treated as adults because they are immature and irresponsible.

### **Maturity Unperceived**

People tend to see what they expect to see, even if it is not really there (or not to see what they do not expect, even if it is there). Even if you act as mature, responsible adults, your parents may not see it. In the early 1970s Sociologist David Rosenhan conducted a clever study showing the power that expectations have on perception. Rosenhan invented a “mental disorder” that did not exist. Then he and seven of his associates appeared at mental hospitals saying they heard voices saying “empty,” “hollow,” and “thud.” Other than using aliases, giving false occupations, and saying that they heard the voices, they all gave truthful facts about themselves (all had been screened beforehand to make sure they were mentally healthy.)

They were all admitted to the mental hospitals and diagnosed as having schizophrenia. Given a total of 2100 pills and hospitalized for an average of 19 days (range was from 9-52 days), they were discharged as schizophrenics in remission. This did not mean that they never had schizophrenia but implied that it was lying dormant and might resurface later. At no time did any of the mental health professionals question their diagnosis of schizophrenia, and all of their behavior was interpreted in light of that label. Normal behavior was overlooked or misinterpreted. Normal disagreements were seen as indicators of deep-seated

emotional disorders. Even writing on a notepad was seen as a sign of a psychological disturbance.

Although no one on the staffs of the mental hospitals noticed that these “patients” were normal, some other people present did. Ironically, the actual patients in the hospitals noticed that the pseudo-patients were sane, normal people. Since these other patients had not seen the “schizophrenia” diagnosis, they were not interpreting the ordinary behavior with that in mind. Some made comments like, “You’re not a patient here, are you? Are you a reporter?”

Rosenhan did not conclude that the hospital staffs were incompetent or dishonest. There was no evidence of consciously trying to make the evidence fit the label. Staff members were just doing their jobs. The problem was that the labels were so powerful that they profoundly affected the way the staff processed and perceived the information. If those behaviors had been observed in a different context, they would have been interpreted entirely differently.

Likewise, if people in our culture think of adolescents as being immature and irresponsible, then your actions will be interpreted in that context. Even if you behave as mature and responsible individuals, your actions may not be perceived as being mature and responsible.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

There is no really good answer to this question. The concept of adolescence is written into the laws of western cultures, so there is no way that those laws will be changed during your teen years. The best that you can do is to convince your parents that you are mature, responsible individuals. To do this, you have to do four things:

- Overcome the self-fulfilling prophecy. If your parents still think of you as children, your natural tendency will be to behave as children and be immature and irresponsible. You will have to overcome that tendency.

- Help your parents perceive. If your parents still think of you as children, they may not recognize your mature and responsible behavior even when it is right before their eyes. You will have to overcome that misperception.
- Earn your parents' trust. Trust exists in relationships and is very complex. It is very hard to build and very easy to destroy.
- Overcome the TCK label. If the TCK profile that some people hold is being inappropriately applied, you may have to overcome additional misperceptions.

First, overcoming the self-fulfilling prophecy will take effort and discipline on your part. The “natural” thing to do is to act as your parents and culture both expect you to. You will have to intentionally act like an adult rather than like a child if you want to be treated as an adult. This will take a conscious effort on your part rather than “going with the flow” and may result in some rejection by your peers.

Second, to help your parents perceive your maturity may be done by just calling their attention to it if they are familiar with the effect expectations have on perceptions. If they are not aware of the kind of research Rosenhan did, perhaps you can show them the “Maturity Unperceived” section above. Then tell them that you are trying to act like an adult, and ask them to notice that and see how you are doing. There are no guarantees of rapid changes here if they are convinced that you are still a child, but over time their perceptions will change.

Third, earning your parents' trust takes time. Trust takes at least months, if not years, to build to a high level. You cannot only tell your parents that you are mature and responsible, you must also show them your maturity and responsibility consistently over time. The key to building trust is to be trustworthy. Think about courtship and marriage. First the couple dates a while with the trust gradually increasing. When trust and commitment reach a particular point, the couple becomes engaged, and the trust increases further as the couple asks themselves if they are ready to

commit to each other for life. Finally, they marry when trust and commitment reach that level.

Unfortunately, although trust takes time to build, just one wrong act can destroy it, and then rebuilding it is more difficult than building it in the first place. Using our example above, suppose you are dating someone and thinking of marriage. Then you come upon that person hidden under the stairwell at school passionately hugging and kissing someone else. What happens to your trust? It is the same way with your parents seeing your maturity. Acting like a child just once will destroy the trust. If and when that happens, the only thing to do is to start rebuilding it again.

Finally, as a TCK you have one more self-fulfilling prophecy and misperception to overcome. As much as we appreciate “the TCK profile” in terms of helping us understand many people and in helping many TCKs understand themselves, it can also be used incorrectly as a label. As we saw earlier, not everyone who has lived in another culture during developmental years becomes a TCK to the same extent. Not everyone has the same personal characteristics, practical skills, rootlessness, restlessness, relational patterns, developmental issues and unresolved grief. If your parents or agency is applying the TCK label to you inappropriately, you may have to take the same steps as when the adolescent label is applied inappropriately.

teens had no identity. It had never been created, but they kept looking for it—sometimes in the wrong places.

## Part 3

### Identity Lost

Erik was a TCK whose parents were Danish, but they separated before Erik was born. Erik was born near Frankfurt, Germany. Three years later his mother married Erik's Jewish pediatrician but waited years before telling him that Dr. Homberger was not really his father. Erik considered himself German, even though his parents were Danish. However, German children rejected him because they considered him a Jew, and Jewish children rejected him because he was tall and blond.

Erik Homberger was an average student and graduated from what we would call a high school. Then he wandered around Europe for a year or so before trying an art school in Germany. After dropping out, he tried another one in Munich; then he moved to Florence, Italy. He wandered around Italy, soaking up the sun and visiting art galleries. Finally at the age of twenty-five, he settled down to work and study.

Erik experienced many of the factors that remove identity from adolescents in our modern western culture. He had little national identity (Danish or German), little community identity (constant moving around), little family identity (mother divorced and remarried), and little religious identity (Jewish or Christian). It is little wonder that Erik Erikson (his biological father's name) was the one to develop the concept of the "identity crisis" during adolescence. He had experienced it himself.

Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 show how our culture did not create an identity for its teenagers as it created adolescence. The

## Chapter 7

### Cultural Identity

One of the early Christian cross-cultural workers, Paul, was a TCK. When Paul was taken into protective custody, and the arresting officer asked who he was, Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia,…” (Acts 21:39). That is, Paul’s parents’ “passport culture” was Jewish, but he was born in Tarsus, a Roman city in what is now southeastern Turkey. Tarsus had a famous university in Paul’s day so that the people there were greatly influenced by Greek thought. In fact, Tarsus, Athens (in Greece), and Alexandria (in Egypt) were three leading cities of the day. Antony and Cleopatra first met on the banks of the river which divides Tarsus.

As a child Paul was heavily influenced by several cultures, the Jewish culture at home, the Roman culture in which he lived, and the Hellenistic culture (mixture of the classic Greek and Oriental cultures) from which he got the language he spoke as a child and the university community there. He spoke Greek fluently as shown by the fact that when he spoke to the arresting officer, he did so in Greek—and before that the officer thought that Paul was an Egyptian leader of 4000 terrorists (Acts 21:38).

Paul also spoke Aramaic, kind of a colloquial Hebrew, and later asked the officer if he could speak in it to the mob from whom he was being protected. Probably as a teenager, Paul had been sent to Jerusalem where he mastered the Old Testament and became devoted to his Jewish faith. As he began speaking to the crowd, he mentioned the cultures that were a part of his identity. He mentioned that he was a Jew, born in Tarsus, and lived in

Jerusalem. Fluent in at least three languages and modes of thought, Paul was a TCK who had a strong cultural identity and was proud of all aspects of it.

Of course, gaining identity as being an adult in the culture was clearly marked at particular ages. Both the Jews and the Romans had specific ceremonies which indicated that the children had become adults.

#### Jews

Even today most people have heard of the Jewish bar mitzvah for men and bat mitzvah for the women, literally becoming a son (or daughter) of the commandment. Although this became a formal ceremony only in later times, the Talmud makes it clear that men of 13 and women of 12 were old enough to perform adult actions having religious and legal implications. The parents were responsible for their sons until the age of 13 and their daughters until the age of 12, but from then on their offspring were considered adults, responsible for their own actions.

The symbol of the boy attaining maturity is being called up to read the Torah. The first time the Torah is read following his thirteenth birthday, the young man performs this act as the first public demonstration of his new role as a full adult member of the community. As noted in Chapter 1, after the father is called to read Torah, he recites the benediction, “Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this one.” From this time on the new man is required to put on tefillin for the morning prayers. Also called phylacteries, the tefillin are small leather cases containing particular Scriptures worn by Jewish men (never boys) on their foreheads and left arms.

Although Paul may not have had that ceremony at the age of 13, he, like Jesus and other men of that day, became a man at 13. We sometimes wonder how Mary and Joseph could have left 12-year-old Jesus behind in Jerusalem and not even miss him for a whole day. We must remember that in less than a year Jesus would have been an adult in his society, old enough to own

property and marry. Socially he was the equivalent of a 17-year-old in America today.

### Romans

Most of us are not as familiar with Roman customs through which young men and women became adults, but in the Roman culture they became adults at about the same ages. From the time they were about a week old, the children wore small trinkets called *bullas* around their necks, probably to ward off evil spirits. At that time, their names were entered in the public registers of Rome, something like our birth records today. Most of us have heard of the Romans wearing togas, and as each of the toddlers became a child, he began wearing a *toga praetexta*.

About the time the boys reached their sixteenth year, they became adults as well. On March 16, a day called *Liberalia*, solemn ceremonies were held to celebrate this. At home each boy laid symbols of his childhood on the family altar, and these included his favorite toys and his *bullula* which he had worn since he was named. He also exchanged his *toga praetexta* for a *toga virilis* which symbolized his growth to manhood. This ceremony at home was followed by more imposing public one at the forum.

Thus, the change from childhood to adulthood was clear. By simply looking at whether or not an individual was wearing a *bullula* and a toga, one could tell if the person was a child or an adult. Expectations and responsibilities were clear for everyone. Unfortunately, things are not as clear in modern western culture.

### USA Today

Some people have proposed that high school graduation is an adulthood ceremony. On a warm summer day the 18-year-old adolescents dress up in black robes and proceed one by one across a platform in front of the others their age with families and friends present. As each one approaches the person in charge, he or she moves some strings from one side of the head to the other and is

given a special piece of paper. Everyone cheers and congratulates. However, this does not mean that they will all be treated as adults by the other adults in the society. About half of them will remain in school for several more years, prolonging their adolescence.

One day walking past a display in a high school, I noticed a small, dark blue, folder which said “Passport to Adulthood” with an eagle symbol on the front. Since it looked like a passport and I was interested in adolescence, I picked it up. Then I noticed that the words “Selective Service System” circled the eagle. Opening it I found the words, “MEN: When you reach 18, you become an adult. With that new status come rewards—and responsibilities. One of the first responsibilities you’ll have is to register with Selective Service.” Registering meant that they might soon be drafted into the armed forces and required to fight overseas.

If only it were that simple and clear when you become adults. Unfortunately, we have no particular age or ceremony that makes people adults. Here are a few of the wide variety of ages at which people are considered adults in different situations.

- Eating at restaurants. There is no particular age at all restaurants, but the most common age to pay adult prices is about 12 or 13. Some restaurants measure how tall the young person is. Of course, restaurant owners know that adolescents are adults physically and eat at least as much, if not more, than other adults.
- Entering movie theatres. There is no particular age at all theatres, but the most common age to pay adult admission is about 12. Theatre owners know that adolescents attend movies more than any other age group, and they will pay full price.
- Dropping out of school. Teenagers today are legally required to attend school until they are somewhere between 13 and 18 years of age, with 16 as the most common age they can stop attending if they want to.
- Working a job. Most states have child-labor laws forbidding teens from working until they are somewhere

between 15 and 18 years of age, with 18 as the most common age at which they can work.

- Getting married. Most states do not allow people to marry until they are 18.
- Voting in elections. This one is set by an amendment to the constitution of the USA at 18.
- Buying alcohol. This one varies but is 21 in most states because they will lose their highway grants from the U.S. government if they set it lower.

Since these ages at which people are considered adults vary from state to state and from situation to situation, teenagers frequently are confused and frustrated about whether or not they are adults. For example, teens may have a full driver's license in one state, but when they move to another state, they cannot even get a permit to drive with a parent. Simply walking from room to room in a motel may change you from adult to child. In the restaurant, you are an adult at 12, but at the front desk you are a child until you are 18, and in the bar you are a child until you are 21. It is amazing that the final passage into adulthood has changed from the "bar mitzvah" to just the "bar."

### **Finding Identity**

Unable to get an adult identity from our culture, many adolescents turn to other ways to feel like adults, like part of society. However, none of these ways give a really lasting identity. Some of the things that people try are examples.

- Drugs. Beginning the use of specific drugs is age related. For many years, the first drug adolescents used to seek their adult identity was tobacco. However, that does not have as strong an attraction now that smoking is less socially acceptable. Alcohol is still accepted in our culture, and the majority of adolescents do start drinking to find an adult identity. The next drug likely to be taken as they get a little older is marijuana. Finally, some adolescents take harder and even more dangerous drugs as they get older. Of

course, these drugs do not actually give them an adult identity, only an identity as delinquents or criminals.

- Conformity. Just through puberty and feeling their lack of identity, conformity is the way some middle school students try to find an identity. They pick out a group at school (most schools have five or six distinct groups), and then they dress, talk, and think like that group. Of course, in a few years these groups, from jocks to potheads, break up as they leave school, and the identity is gone.
- Negativism. Other adolescents try gaining an identity through being different from adults. For example, if adults want them to wear one kind of clothing, the teenagers pick another. If adults want one length of hair, the teens pick another. Of course, this identity is of no use when they try to actually enter adult society and find that no one will hire them.
- "Conversion" and cults. Still other teenagers attempt to gain an identity through religion. Younger ones at about the age of puberty may try a "conversion" experience to see if they are accepted as adults in their local church. When they are still treated as children in the church, they tend to drop out. Older ones (18 and over) may try joining a cult, but when they find that does not bring a satisfying identity, they leave the cult.

Of course, none of these give a satisfying, lasting adult identity to most people in our culture. The only thing that gives such an identity is reaching the age at which one is treated as an adult by others in the culture. That usually occurs after graduation from high school or graduation from college.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

Since adolescence is now an integral part of our culture, you cannot bring about change of the whole culture while you are an adolescent. However, you can probably bring about change in your family, perhaps in your church (at least in the youth group),

and even in your school (if it is a rather small private one). Here are some suggestions.

- Family. Talk it over with other members of your family and ask that people be treated as adults at a particular age. For example, beginning when our children reached the age of 13, my wife and I (as parents) expected them to be much more responsible for themselves. They chose the courses they took in high school (and lived with the consequences of those choices). Rather than giving an allowance, we “paid” them a monthly “salary,” and they bought their own clothing, school supplies, lunches, gas for the car when they could drive, etc.
- Church—youth group. Older youth in our church’s youth group led Bible study groups for younger ones. The middle school students assisted in Sunday school classes. On youth trips some of the older ones were given the responsibility of seeing that the vans were maintained on youth trips, such as checking the oil, the tire pressure, etc. No one double checked on them so they were responsible.
- The Blessing. In your family, church, or school, we suggest asking the parents to give their children a “blessing,” such as was done in the Old Testament. A good book about this is *The Blessing* (1986) by Gary Smalley and John Trent published by Simon & Schuster, New York, NY in paperback. This blessing may be given as a tradition in the family as each child reaches the age at which the parents choose to make the children into adults. It may be done in the church or school at the beginning of middle school (our church does it at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> grade) or at some other chosen age. In this setting each set of parents passes their blessing on to their child in a group setting and hears the blessing of all the other parents present.
- Drugs. Although you may not be tempted to take illegal drugs, many adolescents abuse legal ones not prescribed for them. In fact, in 2004 the Partnership Attitude Tracking Study found that more adolescents had tried Vicodin (4.3

million), Oxycontin (2.3 million), Ritalin/Adderol (2.3 million), and cough medicine (2.2 million) than had tried Crack/Cocaine (2.2 million), Ecstasy (2.0 million), Methamphetamine (1.9 million), and LSD (1.4 million). These legal drugs are a great help to those in pain and with attention problems, but they can be killers when not taken as directed. Never take any drug (prescription or over-the-counter) in any way or in doses that are not specified in the directions.

- TCK potential problem. As a TCK, you may face a problem in addition to the general one of adolescence. If your host culture and passport culture both have the same adolescence, there would be no additional difference for you between cultures. However, if one culture has created adolescence and the other has not, you will face an additional conflict between your two cultures. In this case, it would probably be best for you to pick one culture and live by what it has chosen.



## Chapter 8

### Community Identity

As we saw in Chapter 7, when Paul (a TCK) was taken into protective custody, the arresting officer asked who he was. Paul replied in Greek, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia,…” (Acts 21:39). Paul found his identity not only in his passport and host cultures, but also in his community, the city in which he had lived as a child. Of course, Paul was known as Saul earlier in his life, and Christians today often refer to him as “Saul of Tarsus” to differentiate him from King Saul in the Old Testament. Being from Tarsus gave him a positive identity—he was from an important city known all over the world.

A few minutes later when he addressed the crowd, Paul said in Aramaic, “I am a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city…” (Acts 22:3). He found additional identity in the community where he had lived as a teenager while he was away from home studying theology. Jerusalem was the capital of the nation, and it also had an important part of forming his identity.

In *Ulysses*, Alfred Lord Tennyson said, “I am a part of all that I have met.” That is true. Part of your identity comes from the places you have lived, people you have known, and so forth. The longer you live in a place and the deeper you become involved, the more of your identity comes from it. We all recognize this when we ask someone, “Where are you from?” (A question all TCKs dislike because they are not sure how to answer it).

### New Testament Times

New Testament people were sometimes identified by adding the region they were from to their name, such as “Judas the Galilean” (Acts 5:37). This indicated that Judas was from the northern part of Palestine in an area called Galilee, an area in which people had a distinctive accent in their speech. These people were not as “pure-blood” as the Jews further south in Judea, so the people of Judea looked down on the people in Galilee. Of course, between Galilee and Judea was the region of Samaria. Samaritans were even more racially mixed than those in Galilee, so people from both Judah and Galilee looked down on the Samaritans! Although Judas may not have been proud of being from Galilee, at least it gave him an identity.

At other times New Testament people were identified by adding the town or city where they were from, such as “Jesus of Nazareth.” This phrase occurs in the first Chapter of John where Philip told Nathaniel, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathaniel asked.

Why would Nathaniel make such a comment? Although we hold Nazareth in reverence today, such was not the case at that time. First, Nazareth was in Galilee. Strike one. Second, few people had even heard of Nazareth—it was not important enough even to be mentioned in the Old Testament. Strike two. Third, Jews who had heard of it but lived in other places considered Nazareth a town of low moral and religious standards. Strike three. Thus Nathaniel’s question, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Again, although it was negative, being from Nazareth gave him an identity.

## USA Years Ago

Throughout history people have been greatly influenced by the community where they grew up because the community was a real part of their upbringing. Cornell psychologist Urie Bonfenbrenner (1970, *Two Worlds of Childhood*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, p. 96) wrote about his growing up in New York as a Russian immigrant in the 1920s. “And it wasn’t just your relatives. Everybody in the neighborhood minded your business. Again this had its two aspects. If you walked on the railroad trestle, the ‘phone would ring at your house, and your parents would know what you had done before you got back home. People on the street would tell you to button your jacket, and ask why you were not in church last Sunday.” Whether the children liked it or not, they at least knew that people cared.

Louis Sullivan, Secretary of Health and Human Services in the 1980s, growing up in Georgia in the 1930s said, “I was not just the child of my parents--I was in fact a child of the entire neighborhood. When I was out of sight of the folks and thought I could get away with something, Mr. Jones or Mrs. Smith down the block was sure to step in and administer corrective caring--whether I liked it or not” (*Reader’s Digest*, August, 1991, p. 121). He noted that his neighborhood constantly reinforced particular values, such as self-esteem, self discipline, responsibility, and service.

## USA Today

This influence is not nearly so likely to happen in the USA in the twenty-first century. If adults told children (other than their own) to button their jackets, the children would likely tell them to mind their own business. If other adults stepped in and “administered corrective caring,” they might be sued by the children’s parents. What has happened to change this sense of community identity?

- **Mobility.** Years ago, people tended to stay in the same house all their lives, at least after they were married. They had the same neighbors all their lives and knew them well so that the same neighbors were constantly a part of the children’s lives. Today nearly one person in five moves every year, so people do not know their neighbors well. Even those who stay in the same house year after year do not know their neighbors well because new ones keep moving in all the time.
- **Urbanization.** Years ago most people lived on relatively small farms, in villages, or in small towns. Those on farms knew everyone who lived within walking or riding distance. Those in villages or small towns knew nearly everyone who lived within a mile or so of them. Today the majority of people live in metropolitan areas so that they do not know most of those who live near them. In fact, it is not unusual not to know even the names of people who live in the same block of your street or in the same apartment complex.
- **Consolidation of schools.** Years ago most people went to neighborhood schools to which they could walk. Those who lived on the farms would walk or ride on horseback. One-room schools often were built every three or four miles apart and contained twenty or thirty children in six or seven grades taught by one teacher. Not only did the children know all the other children in the school but also they knew all the parents as well. Today those schools are gone, and children are bussed to larger schools. Children know everyone in their room, but certainly not everyone in their school, and perhaps not even everyone at their grade level.
- **Bussing for racial balance.** At first bussing was done to make a better education possible for everyone. However, during the last half of the twentieth century bussing children to schools far away from their homes was used to achieve racial balance. Children no longer went to school

with others that they knew and saw every day. To get racial balance, children from one neighborhood were bussed to as many as eight or ten different schools. It achieved racial balance, but at the expense of community identity.

- **Air Conditioning.** Years ago people often spent their evenings on their porches or in their yards because the house was hot in the evening. The adults talked from their porches to those who lived next door or walked by. Today people stay in their houses and keep the doors closed to be cool, so they do not get acquainted with those living around them.
- **Television.** Years ago people played games in their yards or homes with others who lived nearby. In doing so, they got to know neighbors well. Today people are much more likely to watch television or a video so that they are not interacting on a personal level with those also watching.
- **Violence.** In some places people stay in their homes because they are afraid of violence in their neighborhoods. This also decreases community identity.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

Of course, adolescent TCKs have no control over many of the things that have resulted in a loss of community identity. TCKs move at least as much as the people who live in only one culture all their lives—and they often move far more often. They have no control over whether they live in a large city or a small town, where they go to school, whether they ride a bus, and so forth. However, there are some things they can do to get a community identity.

- **Become a part of the community wherever you live.** Most communities have some sort of community-wide activities at several times during they year. Some communities have festivals, others have concerts, still others have fairs, and so forth. Wilmore, where I live, has an Independence Day

celebration early in July and the Old Fashioned Musical Christmas early in December, and I seldom miss participating in both. Adolescents are there in many of the activities such as the races in the summer and the music in the winter. What community activities can you participate in where you are?

- **Take pride in community.** All communities have both good and bad things about them, so make it a point to look for the good things and emphasize those. Wilmore is literally five miles from the end of the road because the highway ends at the Kentucky River, so no one ever stops just because they were passing through. However, Wilmore has an influence around the world because of the presence of Asbury College and Asbury Theological Seminary. What can you be proud of in your community?
- **Participate in community activities for teenagers.** These might be related to scouting, clubs, and sports. Although they are called Boy's Clubs and Girl's Clubs, they are for adolescents as well. The largest youth organization in the United States is 4-H. If your community does not have a teen sports league, try to join an adult league. In what activity can you participate in your community?
- **Make it a point to get to know people in your neighborhood.** Greet people on your street in a culturally appropriate way. Make opportunities to meet neighbors whether it is inviting them into your home or meeting them in a nearby restaurant. Have people who live nearby over for a backyard (if you have one) barbeque. What can you do to get acquainted with the people who live near you?
- **Attend public meetings.** If your town council (whatever the governing body is called) is open to the public, go to the meeting and see what the city fathers (or mothers) are discussing. If your school board meeting is open to the public, go and let your voice be heard about what you think should happen in your middle school or high school. What public meetings can you attend?

- Read the local paper. Some local papers can be really funny in what they print. For example, a front page article and picture in our local *Jessamine Journal* was about a squirrel interrupting the electrical supply to someone's house! These are always good for a laugh. However, there is no better way to learn about your community than reading about events happening in the local paper.
- Learn the history of your community. Most communities have a group of people, whether officially recognized or not, who are interested in the history of the community. Some even have books written about them. Learn about your community and visit places you learn about.
- Find other TCKs. It is likely that other TCKs also live in your community. As a TCK, you will have much in common with other TCKs even if you have lived in completely different cultures. As pointed out earlier, TCKs form something like a community of themselves.

## Chapter 9

### Family Identity

Throughout history teenagers have found their identity not only in their cultures and communities, but also in their families. Since children lived with their families at least until they reached their teen years, it seemed obvious that they would get much of their identity from that family. With our modern emphasis on individualism, we tend to downplay family identity, sometimes even thinking that it is unfair to emphasize who our parents and grandparents are. Such thinking is quite out of line with early Christian thought.

#### New Testament Times

The New Testament begins with talking about family identity by giving the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1). Most devout Jews of his day could give a genealogy similar to this one about Jesus because their family history was of vital importance. How many generations can you give in your family? Can you name your great-grandparents? How about your great-great-grandparents? How about your great-great-great grandparents? Jesus, and most of those living in his day, could name their ancestors for hundreds of years.

Of course, "Jesus son of David" sounds strange to us. We usually do not name our children Jesus, but remember that "Jesus" is the same as the Old Testament name "Joshua." In addition, rather than saying "son of David," we would say "David's son."

Therefore, the way we might say his name that would be more familiar to us would be “Joshua Davidson.”

A quick search through an address book results in finding many names ending in “son.” John’s son is there as Johnson. Peter’s son is there as Peterson. Also there are Benson, Jackson, Robertson, Stevenson, Williamson—and the list could go on and on. In fact, if you would follow Jesus genealogy in Matthew 1, Jesus’ father would have been “Joe Jacobson” (because his father’s name was Jacob).

As we saw in Chapter 2, the “bar” in “bar mitzvah” meant “son of.” That is, at the age of 13, the young man became a “son of the commandment.” Wherever you see a name beginning with “Bar,” that means “son of.” Sometimes this is translated both ways for us, “A blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus)” as begging and began to shout, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:46-47). When Jesus was talking to Simon Peter in Matthew 16:17, some translators translate it as “Simon Barjona.” However, others translate it as “Simon, son of Jonah.” These passages are filled with references to family identity, whether they are translated as “Bar....” or “son of ....”

Furthermore, note that the “Bar” does not mean only the son of one’s immediate biological father, but also the son of any ancestors before him. As we have seen, Jesus was repeatedly referred to as “son of David” (Davidson). Family identity went much further back than one’s biological father so that “son of” referred to an ancestor centuries before. As we saw in the first verse of the New Testament, Jesus’ genealogy went back to Abraham. In Luke 3 it goes back to “...the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

Paul wrote, “I am an Israelite myself, a descendent of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin” (Romans 11:1). Every Jew knew at least that he was a son of Abraham, and a son of Isaac, and a son of Jacob, and then which child of Jacob (for Paul it was Benjamin) was his or her ancestor. Family identity was very important so everyone knew his or her family identity.

## USA Years Ago

The emphasis on family identity continued for centuries. My grandfather’s generation born in the late nineteenth century was proud of the Koteskey family history. He and his brothers and sisters talked about the Koteskeys in Bohemia during the fifteenth century being followers of John Huss. You have probably never heard of John Huss, and perhaps not even of Bohemia. However, John Huss was greatly influenced by the writings of the fourteenth century English reformer John Wycliffe, whose name most cross-cultural worker kids have heard at one time or another. Bohemia was part of what is now the Czech Republic, and statues of Huss abound in Prague.

Followers of Huss became known as Hussites. Many of them were driven from Bohemia after Huss was burned at the stake for denying the infallibility of the Pope and asserting the authority of Scripture over the church. They went to Moravia where they continued to worship God as they saw fit. You may have never heard of the Moravians, but they were the ones who were singing in the middle of a storm during the eighteenth century when John Wesley was returning to England as a defeated cross-cultural worker to native Americans. Wesley was amazed at their peace in the face of death and was greatly influenced by the Moravians in the founding of the Methodist Church.

As a teenager at the middle of the twentieth century, such oral “family history” seemed quaint to me. I did not really pay much attention to this part of my identity because I had internalized the individuality so prominent at that time. However, now I treasure that part of my identity. What happened to that emphasis on family identity?

## USA Today

No one factor is responsible for the loss of family identity. Values have changed over the years so that people no longer prize the family as they once did. Behaviors have changed as well so

that people now commonly do things with approval that would have been frowned on a century ago. Here are some of the changes that have occurred.

- **Individuality.** Rather than emphasizing cooperation and the group, US culture now prizes competition and the individual. Although teams are honored from time to time, most honor goes to the stars on the team. Many adolescents and other young adults see taking family help as being not as good as accomplishing things on their own. People want to feel like they accomplished their goals without any help from anyone, especially from their families.
- **Divorce.** At the beginning of the twentieth century there were about seven divorces for every 100 marriages in any one given year. Marriage was seen as a lifetime commitment and those who divorced were frowned on for not having kept that promise to remain “until death do us part.” Divorce was seen as a failure rather than as a normal part of life. When divorce occurs, children and adolescents usually lose family identity, especially in a “messy” divorce.
- **Remarriage.** Not only do marriages break up, but new ones follow. The child or adolescent usually remains with the mother after a divorce, so when she remarries the child has a last name different from his or her parents. If the parents divorce again (and divorce is more common with each remarriage) followed by another remarriage, the adolescents have different last names if not legally adopted. If legally adopted, the teenager has to change his or her name. These serial marriages make it difficult to achieve family identity.
- **Unmarried couples.** Millions of couples live together without being married so that mother and father have different last names. What name does the child use? When the couples stop living together and begin living with

someone else, that only adds to the confusion in family identity.

- **Unmarried mothers.** Millions of unmarried women have children and do not live with the fathers. Some continue to live with their own parents while others maintain their own homes. Adolescents in such situations are unsure of who to identify with, a situation particularly difficult for the male with no father present.
- **Mobility.** A century ago people often lived just down the road from their parents and close to other family members. Although some pioneers left to find better opportunities far away, most people stayed near the family farm or in the same town where extended family lived. With aunts, uncles, grandparents, and even great-grandparents close by, children and teenagers could hear the family “story” from a variety of relatives.
- **Technology.** Changes in work and play have had an impact on family activities. At the beginning of the twentieth century people lived on the “family farm” where the family worked together keeping weeds out of their crops or caring for their animals. By the end of the twentieth century most land was being farmed by corporations with the work being done by machines with little interaction among family members.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

Of course, many other factors also have contributed to the loss of family identity. Given that family identity is no longer what it used to be, the question is what can adolescents do. Following is a list of some things people have tried with success. Of course, no one would want to do all of these, but your family may enjoy trying some of them.

- Have a family night together once a week where you do something everyone enjoys, such as playing a favorite game.

- Make a family photo album, scrapbook, or video together and keep adding to it on a regular basis.
- Get online and research your family history, something easily done from anywhere in the world.
- Take family vacations together doing something everyone likes.
- Develop family traditions that you all enjoy.
- Attend family reunions when you are in your passport country.
- Have family devotions together.
- Ask your grandparents about the history of the family.
- Make it a point for everyone to be home for at least one meal a day as a family.
- Have a family week with no TV or videos in the evening.
- Stay with extended family when in your passport country.
- Research the origin of your family name.
- Do something special as a family on special occasions such as birthdays, such as going out to eat, visiting a favorite place, etc.
- Visit the places where your parents grew up and talk to their old friends and neighbors.
- Write your grandparents at least monthly while out of your passport country.
- Take family outings frequently to visit places in which you are interested or do activities you all like to do.
- Have a family council where you all meet at least once a month to make decisions about what you do as a family.
- Sit as a family in church at least one service on Sunday and then with your friends at other services.
- Laugh together about family jokes—“Where’s the prairie dog town?” brings howls of laughter in our home.
- If you are a child of divorce, learn about both sides of your families.

## Chapter 10

### Religious Identity

Throughout history teenagers have found their identity not only in their cultures, communities, and families, but also in their religion. In fact, their cultural, community, and family identities were often intertwined with their religious identity. Being a Jew was a religious as well as a cultural identity. Likewise, family and community identity concepts were often used in referring to one’s religious identity

#### Bible Times

In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 14 begins by talking about family identity: “You are the children of the LORD your God.” Thus every Jew knew that he was not only a child of Abraham or a son of David, but he or she was also a child of God. When people referred to God, they often spoke of him as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

As we saw in Chapter 8, the ceremonies that developed among the Jews (and still are celebrated today) to turn children into adults were the bar mitzvah and the bat mitzvah. Part of adulthood was one’s religious identity when he or she literally became a “son of the commandment” or “daughter of the commandment.” The very first adult act was reading from the Torah—a religious act. After that the new man wore the tefillin, a religious act as well. The Jews found their religious identity to be part of their cultural adult identity.

This emphasis carried over into Christianity in the New Testament. In just a few verses that Paul wrote to the Romans he repeatedly used family terms: sons of God, Spirit of sonship, *Abba* Father, God's children, we are children, we are heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8: 14-17). These four verses contain eight "family" words relating to a Christian's religious identity. Not only is God our father, but Christ is our brother.

In the Old Testament Deuteronomy 14 continues in verse 2 saying that the Israelites were a people holy to the Lord their God, chosen by the Lord to be his treasured possession. The Old Testament Jews often prided themselves on being God's chosen people, people looking for the promised Messiah. This emphasis is carried over into the New Testament where Peter told the church that they were a chosen people, a people belonging to God, the people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10). Paul also wrote that God chose us in him before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Both the Old Testament Jews and the New Testament Christians found their identity in being God's chosen people.

### USA Years Ago

For all practical purposes there was just one church for centuries after the beginning of Christianity. Church leaders made the decisions about what was part of the Christian faith. These leaders decided how the Bible was interpreted and how people should behave. The identity of all Christians centered in the existing church at that time.

A century or two ago in many churches in the United States people called each other "brother" and "sister" whenever introducing or greeting others. For example, to introduce someone, people said, "Brother Pete, I'd like you to meet Sister Martha." When greeting someone at church or on the street, people said, "Good morning, Brother Andrew. How are you today?" Of course, this was to acknowledge that Christians were a part of the family of God, children of God. Children in the same family were brothers and sisters. People outside the church would

be addressed just by their names. Although this is still the custom in some churches, the majority of people do not use this form of address.

### USA Identity Today

Many things have combined to remove religious identity from people in western culture. Let us consider some of these.

- **Reformation.** The reformer most widely known among TCKs is John Wycliffe who lived in England during the fourteenth century. Among other things in his teaching theology at Oxford he spread the doctrine that the Scriptures, rather than the church, were the supreme authority. Mainly the work of his followers, the *Wycliffe Bible* was the first translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible into the English language. Although the followers of Wycliffe did not form another church, the power of the church was broken.
- **Denominations.** By the fifteenth century these ideas were amplified by John Huss in Bohemia, and he was burned at the stake in 1415 for promoting them. His followers formed the Hussites. This was followed in the sixteenth century with Luther in Germany and Calvin in Switzerland, and their theologies became known as Lutheranism and Calvinism. Several new groups of churches, denominations, were begun to promote these new interpretations of Christianity, each with their own slightly different Christian identity.
- **Independent "Community" Churches.** Denominations flourished and continued to plant churches in new places. Of course, independent churches have always existed, but with the development of postmodernism in the last half of the twentieth century independent churches sprang up everywhere. Each of these independent churches have their own set of beliefs, their own different Christian identity.



- Freedom. The first amendment of the Constitution of the United States says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Although such freedom is good, if democracy continues to spread across the world, there will be fewer and fewer state churches, producing less and less religious identity.
- Pluralism. Denominations realized that their restricted interpretations of Christianity resulted in some people leaving the church. They then began promoting diversity and inclusivity so that people who were quite different would remain in the church.

The invention of adolescence and the lack of identity for teenagers even in the church resulted in many adolescents dropping out of church. Shortly after the middle of the twentieth century studies showed that attendance at Sunday School increased during elementary school, peaked at about sixth grade, then declined through junior high (middle school) and high school. More than a third of the students attending Sunday School in late elementary school dropped out by late high school.

In an effort to stop this loss, the church invented youth ministry. The church’s response to the invention of adolescence was to create a separate category of people and assign a pastor to care for them. This was analogous to the creation of Boy and Girl Scouts, boys’ and girls’ clubs, and the government’s invention of 4-H clubs—the creation of a new category of individuals with an older adult to care for them.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

The only way to get a religious identity is to get involved, learn all you can, and initiate changes where they are needed. Too often teenagers try to find their identity by only observing what is going on and thinking about things to try to discover who they are. Observing and contemplating are not wrong, but without getting involved, you will never become a real part of the body, and you

will never find that identity. Some of the ways you can get involved are noted below.

- Become involved in the music ministry of your church. Join the worship team. Become a member of the choir. Play an instrument. Join the band/orchestra. Form a musical group that performs the kind of music you enjoy most.
- Learn about the history of the church. Find out the background of your own local church. Even if it is an independent “Bible” or “community” church, it had some kind of background through the people who planted it—they did not just start from nothing.
- Take a position where you can lead others. Teach or assist in a children’s Sunday School class. Direct the craft sessions or the recreation time at Vacation Bible School. Lead a small group of younger teens in a Bible study group or a beginning discipleship group.
- Study the history of your denomination or other group with which your church is affiliated. Find out what that group does other than “hold church.” Also look at the group in the light of the history of Christianity from New Testament times to the present.
- Do something that helps in the day-to-day running of the church. Mow the grass or shovel the snow. Paint rooms that are getting dingy. Clean rooms or areas of the grounds. Help with the children in the nursery. Become an usher.
- Read the beliefs (doctrine, theology) that your church promotes. Look in the Bible for Scriptural principles that support those beliefs. Become part of a Bible quiz team to learn all about the Bible you can. Discover how your church fits into Christian identity throughout the Bible.
- Participate in the groups that govern your church. Attend a board meeting to see how the leaders function. Become a board member yourself if that is allowed. Attend denominational gatherings if you belong to one. Attend the

annual meeting of the group to which your church belongs—the annual conference, general convention, etc.

- Find out about parts of Christianity different from your church. The best way to understand your own church is to see how it is different from others. Visit other local churches. Compare your denomination with another one. Look at a religion different from Christianity.
- Become involved in a ministry your church has to people outside the church. Visit people in the hospital. Join a group holding services in a jail. Bring cheer to people in a nursing home. Participate in a short-term trip to people in another culture, either in your own country or overseas.
- Take an active role in family devotions in your home. If your family does not have a family worship time together, ask if you can start one. Begin by reading the Bible and having prayer together—and you can then expand to whatever your family would like.
- Join some group outside your church. Athletes become a part of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. College students become a part of Intervarsity or Campus Crusade. High school students join Young Life or Youth for Christ.

## Part 4

### Sex Forbidden

By definition adolescence is the time of life between puberty and adulthood, between the time you become sexually mature and you are allowed to marry. We saw in Part 2 that before our culture invented adolescence people were allowed to marry any time after they reached sexual maturity. However, with the decrease in the age of puberty and the increase in the age of adulthood, people cannot legally marry for several years after puberty. In addition, in many developed countries they do not marry until several years after that legal age for educational and financial reasons.

Sexuality then is a major issue for adolescents. Since they cannot marry and express their sexuality with their spouses, a major question becomes, “What do I do with my newly developed sexual desires? What do I do with these ‘raging hormones’ that everyone talks about?” It would be much simpler if western culture had also invented some switch that could turn off those hormones, like people can turn off the electricity to their homes for a while then turn it back on later. However, adolescents cannot call the power company and have it turn off their hormones for a few years.

Chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14 are about what people do with this sexual drive between the time they become sexually mature at about 12 to 14 years of age and when they marry at 25 to 30 years of age. What do people do, and what does the Bible have to say about expressing or not expressing sexuality for the first dozen or so years of their sexual maturity?

## Chapter 11

### Celibacy

“Celibacy? What does celibacy have to do with adolescence? I’m not a priest or a nun, and I don’t know any adolescents who are priests or nuns—I don’t even think adolescents can be priests or nuns. Besides, many of the adolescents I know certainly aren’t celibate—they’re sleeping around like you wouldn’t believe.”

These may mirror your thoughts as you looked at the title of this chapter. Yet when you go back to the definition of adolescence as discussed in Part 2, you remember that adolescence is the time of life between puberty and adulthood. What is the average age of puberty? In women it is about twelve and a half, and in men it is about fourteen. One of the marks of adulthood is being able to marry, and what is the lowest age at which people can marry? That is eighteen in the United States.

“I know that. What does that have to do with celibacy?”

#### Celibacy

Once again we have to look at the dictionary to see what terms mean. Celibacy comes to us from the Latin word *caelibatus*, which is from *caelebs*, meaning “a single life.” The dictionary defines celibacy as “an unmarried state; single life,” and it defines a celibate as “a person who is unmarried.” Adolescents in the USA are considered to be children and not allowed to marry until they are eighteen without their parents’ consent. Therefore, they are unmarried and, by definition, celibate. Although we usually

link celibacy with taking a religious vow not to marry, it applies to all single people—including adolescents. If you are not married, you are living a life of celibacy.

There is nothing wrong with being celibate. In fact, the Bible says celibacy is good.

- Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. (1 Corinthians 7:1)
- Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried. (1 Corinthians 7:8)
- The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” (Matthew 19:10)

Therefore, it is not wrong to be unmarried; it is good. The Bible does not say that everyone should live in the unmarried state, but it is good when someone does.

You may think that living a life of celibacy has something to do with not having sex, and today the word is many times used in that sense, but that was not the original meaning. When our culture invented adolescence, people seemed to assume that if they passed laws against people getting married, they would not have sex either. Although they had some flaws, the Kinsey studies of sexual behavior in men and women in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s came as a rude awakening. Kinsey and his fellow researchers found that celibacy did not necessarily lead to chastity.

#### Chastity

Chastity comes to us from the Latin word *castitas* which is from *castus* which means chaste or pure. The dictionary defines chastity as “abstinence from all unlawful sexual activity..., purity.” Therefore, people may be married (not celibate) and yet living a life of chastity (purity)—abstaining from sex with anyone except their spouses. When teaching, I used to say to classes of single college students that I knew they were living lives of celibacy, but I was not sure whether or not they were living lives of chastity—and I was not celibate, but I was living a life of chastity.

As noted above, there is nothing wrong with being celibate. In fact, the Bible says celibacy is good. However, we must not quote just one verse, but look at the context, in this case, at the verses following each one quoted above.

- When Paul said, “It is good for a man not to marry,” he went on to say, “But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:2)
- When Paul said, “It is good for them to stay unmarried,” he went on to say, “But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” (1 Corinthians 7:9)
- When the disciples said, “It is better not to marry,” Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.” (Matthew 19:11)

Although the Bible says that celibacy is good, it certainly does not say that everyone needs to remain unmarried. In fact, all of the passages above about celibacy being good are followed by passages saying that most people will not be able to live celibate lives without sin. Marriage is good too.

Paul wrote to Timothy that in later times there would be cultures that forbid marriage (1 Timothy 4:3), but he went on to caution Timothy not to do so. He told Timothy not to put any woman under 60 years of age on the list of widows to be cared for by the church because their sensual desires would cause them to want to marry—so he urged those under 60 to remarry (1 Timothy 5:3-16).

If we are to be chaste, to live lives of purity, we must raise this question. What does it mean to be pure? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). What does it mean to be pure in heart? In these postmodern times everyone, including Christians, seems to have a different answer to this question. Some people (nearly 1/3 of evangelical Christians) believe that single people can do anything, including having sex outside marriage, and still be pure. They quote the first part of Titus 1:15, “To the pure, all things are

pure.” Other people believe that even having sexual thoughts is wrong. They quote the last part of Matthew 5:28, “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

We will find this lack of agreement as we consider adolescent sexuality. Since adolescence did not exist when the Bible was written, the Bible has little to say about young unmarried people. In those days teenagers who had passed puberty and were not married had chosen to remain unmarried—or their parents had made that choice for them. If they and their parents wanted marriage, it was just an accepted part of life. Whenever the Bible says little about an issue, people today take many different positions on that issue. Let us begin with the sexual situation in which there is not action at all, only thought, lusting after someone.

### **Fantasy**

You probably noticed that your thoughts about sex changed when you went through puberty. Before puberty, you thought about sex, but it was basically a matter of curiosity. Why did people keep some parts of their bodies covered all the time? Why did most adults seem so reluctant to talk about where babies came from other than saying from inside “mommy’s tummy?” You wondered about things, but it was no big deal, and the thoughts did not keep coming.

However, since puberty you think about sex much more. Sometimes it seems like you just cannot stop thinking about it. This is not at all surprising when you think about what happened at puberty. Those same “raging hormones” that brought about the physical changes in your body brought about changes in your thinking and motivation. Before those hormones were in your body, you did not have the sexual desires and sexual thoughts that you now have. Now you have that sexual drive, but your culture will not allow you to marry and express those desires with your spouse.

Think about it this way. If someone will not let you breathe (chokes you), within minutes, your thoughts will be centered on getting air. If you have no water, within hours, your thoughts will be centered on getting water. If you have no food, within days, your thoughts will be centered on getting food. In fact, during World War II the US government did an experiment to find out what would happen to people on starvation diets. The young men who volunteered were fed 1200 calorie per day diets similar to people in concentration camps. Within weeks they had lost a quarter of their normal weight, and their thoughts and conversations were centered on food. Their walls were covered with pictures of cakes, pies, grilled steaks, and so forth. They read cookbooks in their spare time. In short, food dominated their thoughts.

When those hormones started flowing at puberty, you had a drive you did not have before. Since your culture will not let you marry and express that drive, your thinking about sex increases. If drives for air, water, and food are never satisfied, individuals will die in a matter of weeks. If sexual drives are never satisfied, humanity will die in a generation. God made your sexual drives very powerful so that humanity would survive. You may say that it is not fair that your culture will not let you marry and satisfy this drive—and it is not fair. We live in a fallen world where life is not fair.

In addition, external temptations to sexual fantasy have increased greatly since adolescence was invented. Centuries ago to see graphic representations of sexual things, one had to look at paintings or carvings on the walls of caves, on the walls of buildings, or on canvas. If one wanted to read sexual material it was in limited supply as hand written material. If one wanted to listen to sexually oriented material, one had to listen in person to someone talking. During the last century we have come through the time when all of these were freely available at the newsstand and at the theater to the time when it comes into our home literally through the air.

Today pornography is available via satellite to people anywhere in the world. They can listen on their radios, watch it on television, and access it on the Internet. TCKs do hear it on radios and see it on television, but the newest and most common way is through the Internet. Although one can literally receive it through the air if wireless is available, the most common way is through a telephone line via a modem. TCKs are not alone in accessing this. *Christianity Today* did a survey of pastors and found that 37% of the pastors filling it out reported a current struggle with Internet pornography.

This pornography is such a problem because it is accessible, anonymous, and affordable. It is accessible because anyone with a computer and a connection to the Internet can get it at the click of a mouse. People think that it is anonymous because no one knows that they have accessed it—of course, their Internet service provider, the porn site they visited, and others between (as well as God) know. It is affordable because many sites offer “free” porn to get people interested and then offer them some “better” stuff for a price.

Not only is such pornography accessible, anonymous, and affordable, but it is also addicting. People find that they soon are unable to control their urge to look at it and listen to it, even if it means the loss of reputation, family, job, and friends. One of the most common ways for people to become addicted is to “check it out to see if it is as bad as everyone says.” No need to check it out—it is. In addition to it being addicting, here are some other problems with viewing it.

- Expectations. Real people do not look like or act like the ones in pornography. Those you see have often have makeup covering their imperfections and act or pose like the director or photographer has told them to.
- Disappointment. Since real people are different, you are likely to be disappointed in them. People have told me about their disappointment in sex with their spouses because their expectations were not met.

- Brevity. Those who look at pornography find that, like in any other addiction, they need more and more to get the same “satisfaction.” They look for more explicit pictures, then violence, etc.
- Permanence. While satisfaction is brief, the memories are permanent. The pictures or videos you display on the walls of your mind as an adolescent will be there after you marry. When you want to become excited by your spouse, those images intrude.

The Bible says nothing about the Internet, and little about unmarried teenagers viewing pornography—because neither was available at the time the Bible was written. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). Of course, this was written to married people (single people cannot commit adultery), but most people maintain that if this lust is adultery for a married person, it is immorality (fornication) for an unmarried person. In fact, the Greek word for “immorality” is *porneia*, from which we get our word “pornography.”

### What can adolescent TCKs do?

Study what the Bible has to say about sexuality. At the end of each day of creation God saw that it was good. After he created humans male and female, he saw that it was VERY good. Before sin came into the world the husband and wife were both naked and felt no shame. Sex is good, part of a holy life. Sin corrupts it.

When the Bible talks about being holy, it is usually in the context of sexuality. The major passage about sex in the Old Testament is Leviticus 18-20. Twice in this passage about sexual behavior, God tells his people to be holy because he is holy (Leviticus 19:2 and 20:7-8). The major passage about sex in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 5-7. When talking about sexual sin, Paul emphasizes that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Read other passages about being sexually pure and being

holy, and you will be surprised about how often they occur together

Think about good things. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians (4:8) to think about good things, pure and lovely things. You can control your thoughts, directing them toward such good things. Remember that God made sex good. Jesus made it very clear (Mark 7:14-23) that things from the outside do not enter the heart, but if a person’s heart is sinful, bad things can come out of it, such as evil thoughts, sexual immorality, adultery, and lewdness.

Living in different countries means that TCKs face a variety of problems that are not found in their passport countries. There may be more illicit sexually oriented material on television or on billboards. Prostitution may be legal and prevalent—in fact, in some countries a father is expected to take his son to a prostitute when the son reaches puberty or a particular age. Be aware of these things and discuss them with your parents and pastors.

Internet pornography involves dealing with a problem related to your computer; you can do several things to clean up your computer use.

- Most Internet service providers have some kind of filtering software that will block access to pornographic sites, so use that.
- If you already have a filter but use a password to bypass the blocked sites, have someone else put in a new password so you cannot access some sites unless that friend is there.
- Since everyone surfing the Internet or searching for something specific on it is likely to at some time access an inappropriate site, decide in advance that you will click on the “back” icon as soon as you realize what it is, without looking at it in detail.
- Keep your computer in a “public” place in the house so that others are around whenever you are using the computer.
- Have someone hold you accountable by coming in at random times to look at the history of sites you have visited on the Internet.

- Have someone hold you accountable by stopping by at random times to look at the “cookies” that have been placed in your computer to see that there are none from pornographic sites.
- Ask your parents (or someone else) to receive a history of the web sites you visit each month. You can have this done free at [www.xxxchurch.com](http://www.xxxchurch.com).
- Avoid discussing your Internet problem with an opposite-gender friend because doing so often increases the intimacy of that friendship, leading to temptation.
- Admit to yourself and to God that you are powerless to control this behavior on your own.
- Admit to at least one other person of the same gender that you are powerless to control your Internet activity on your own.
- Have an accountability group or partner that you meet with regularly (weekly, if possible) to report how you are doing and hold you accountable.
- Make a ruthlessly honest moral inventory of your life; it is likely to include more than just Internet immorality.
- Ask God to forgive what you have done and help you stop doing it again.
- Record in a journal every time you think of accessing pornography on the Internet, and your response to it. Look for patterns leading to accessing pornography and resisting the temptation to do so.
- Write a “good-bye” letter to your addiction, that “problematic companion” who was always there but whom you never want to see again.
- Engage in the following every day, and record them in your journal.
  - Begin each day with prayer for resistance to Internet temptation.
  - Call and report to a recovering buddy.
  - Read some recovery literature or devotionals.

--End each day with prayers of thanksgiving for resistance (and of confession, if necessary).

## Chapter 12

### Solitary Sex

In addition to thinking about sex, most adolescents engage in some kind of sexual activity themselves whether awake or asleep. Adolescents have the drive to express their sexuality as a part of the sexual maturity that comes with puberty; however, since they cannot marry, that expression often takes place in other ways before marriage. In the next three chapters we will consider the most common kinds of sexual behaviors of adolescents, what the Bible has to say about each, and what people have to say about each.

#### Nocturnal Emissions

Adolescents who are not sexually active in other ways often have sexual orgasms in their sleep. This is true of a large majority of male adolescents (probably more than three-fourths) and a minority of the female adolescents (probably about one-quarter). While asleep some people have sexual orgasms, and they may awaken wondering what has happened. Other people do not even wake up when it happens. These are accompanied by sexual dreams in some people but not in others. Even if they did not awaken with the orgasm, when young men awaken they find the semen from their orgasm and know that something has happened. This is why they are sometimes called “wet dreams.”

If these orgasms are accompanied by dreams, adolescents may feel guilty about them—that they have sinned in their sleep. However, although people can control their thoughts while awake

(as we mentioned in the last chapter), they cannot control their dreams while asleep. No one needs to feel guilty about their dreams.

When looking at what the Bible has to say about sexuality, I always find it fascinating to look at the Authorized Version, commonly known as the King James Version. At the time William Shakespeare was writing in England, Lancelot Andrewes was chosen to create a new English translation of the Bible. Just imagine him and the most learned churchmen (women were not Bible translators then) sitting around a large table 400 years ago translating Deuteronomy.

All has been going rather routinely until they reach Chapter 23. Here they face some challenges in translating the early verses. However, when they reach verse 10 (the only verse in the Bible clearly about nocturnal emissions), one of them proposes a first possible wording. Another one responds, “It says WHAT?”

After considerable discussion, they finally settle on, “If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come in the camp.” Not knowing a better way to say it, they say “uncleanness that chanceth him by night.” Of course, modern translations say is “unclean because of a nocturnal emission.” While sleeping at night the man has a sexual orgasm and semen is produced: nocturnal=night and emission=semen produced. And like the KJV states, it “chanceth him by night.” That is, it just happens.

Some adolescents think that “unclean” means sinful, or perhaps dirty. Remember that in the Old Testament the “unclean” means to be ceremonially unclean, not permitted to participate in certain religious ceremonies. Note that this “unclean” man did not need to ask forgiveness, only to stay out of the camp until evening, then wash and return to normal life in the camp. Note that many things can make one “unclean” in Leviticus 15, such as a woman’s menstrual period, and anyone who touched her bed or anything she sat on was unclean until evening. In Leviticus 22 one could become unclean by touching anything touched by a corpse or even



“any crawling thing,” and he would be unclean until evening. After sunset and washing with water, he could eat the sacred offerings.

Having a nocturnal emission is a sign of sexual maturity, not a sin. A few people in the distant past concluded that people were sinning in their sleep, but the Bible never says that. Some early people even had themselves castrated to try to stop this “evil” behavior. I do not know of anyone today who claims that this is sinful or evil in any way. It is a normal outcome of being sexually mature and not having a regular sexual outlet in marriage. After you marry, you will find that nocturnal emissions will greatly decrease or stop altogether.

### **Masturbation**

Most adolescents discover that touching their genitals feels good and that by stroking their genitals they can experience a sexual orgasm. This is the most common way for both male and female adolescents to have their first orgasm, and it is the most common sexual outlet for both during adolescence. More than 90% of male adolescents and about 50% of female adolescents have at least experimented with masturbation, and many do it frequently.

Masturbation is probably the most controversial sexual behavior in which adolescents engage. In some cultures masturbation is considered natural and just a normal part of growing up. In other cultures, masturbation is frowned upon, even considered a sexual perversion. These differences are also found among Christians in most cultures. What does the Bible have to say?

Unlike nocturnal emissions, the Bible does not have anything directly to say about masturbation. However, some of the particular wording of verses in the King James Version resulted in misunderstandings in the past.

- And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother’s wife, that he

spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother (Genesis 38:9).

- Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practice it because it is in the power of their hand (Micah 2:1).
- Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: Neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind (1 Corinthians 6:9).

Until about a century ago many Christians condemned masturbation as sinful on the basis of one or more of these verses. However, when you read these verses in a modern translation, you will find that none of them refer to masturbation.

- Masturbation used to be called “Onanism” because of Genesis 38:9. However, Onan was trying to practice a type of birth control (an ineffective one) to keep from completely obeying the command given in Deuteronomy 25:5-6. He was not masturbating.
- The people referred to in Micah 2:1 were just plotting evil during the night and carried out their plans when they got up in the morning. This was not referring to sex.
- Masturbation used to be called “self-abuse” because of that translation of 1 Corinthians 6:9. However, this was referring to homosexual behavior, not masturbation.

Since the Bible does not say anything about masturbation, Christians in all cultures have taken a wide range of positions on it. Some say it is acceptable, and others say that it is not. Here are a couple of extremes.

In his book, *Christian Counselor’s Manual*, Jay Adams (1973, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker, pp. 399-401) titled a section of one chapter “Masturbation is sin.” In that section he said, “There does not seem to be any direct reference to masturbation (as such) in the scriptures....will not be mastered by anything....adultery of the heart...not presented as a Biblical option....it constitutes a perversion of the sexual act.” Note that he gives four reasons why it is a sin: (1) some people become compulsive about their

masturbation; (2) some people fantasize during masturbation; (3) the Bible does not say that it is all right, so it must be wrong; and (4) he classifies it as a perversion.

In his book, *The Stork is Dead* (1968, Waco, TX, Word, p. 73, written for adolescents), Charlie Shedd titled one chapter “Masturbation—Gift of God.” In that chapter he said, “Which brings me to what I told my own children. What I taught them is that masturbation is a gift of God. What if this was a really wise provision of a very wise creator? What if he gave it to us because he knew we’d need it?...so long as you can accept it as a natural part of growing up; then you thank God for it and use it as a blessing.”

I said at the beginning of this section that masturbation is controversial. Adams says that it is a sin; Shedd says that it is a gift of God. People cannot be more different than that. In his book, *Sexual Understanding before Marriage*, Herbert Miles has two sections titled, “When is masturbation sinful?” and “When is masturbation not sinful?” So, what is a Christian adolescent to do?

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

The Bible says little about either of these solitary sexual behaviors. Since the Bible does have one clear reference to nocturnal emissions, and they are not regarded as sinful, we can be quite confident that they are not. They are no more sinful than a woman having her monthly menstrual period or touching a corpse or touching a snake. There is no reason to feel guilty about having nocturnal emissions. As Christians we do not follow all the Old Testament rules about ceremonial uncleanness, so about all such experiences mean to adolescents now is that they are adults. They really are sexually mature.

Even people who believe that masturbation is sinful agree that the Bible does not say anything about it. Of course, adolescence had not been invented when the Bible was written, so that may be why masturbation is not mentioned. Since people could marry at puberty, they could express their sexuality with

their husband or wife and would feel little need to express their sexuality in a solitary manner.

A century or more ago people thought that masturbation caused many physical diseases, ranging from acne to cancer. It is easy to see how they could come to that conclusion if they asked adolescent young men with acne if they had been masturbating, more than 90% would answer, “Yes.” Likewise, if they asked older persons with cancer if they had ever masturbated, they would also be likely to answer, “Yes.” However, the problem was that they did not also ask people who did not have acne or cancer if they had masturbated. If they had asked, they would have found that the same percentages would answer, “Yes.” There is no evidence that it causes any illness.

However, that does not mean that masturbation is a good thing that should be sought. Adolescents (and other adults) need to ask these questions about masturbation:

- Is sexual fantasy involved in my masturbation? If so, all of the problems related to sexual fantasy discussed in the previous chapter are involved here as well. The Bible does talk about lust, and it is wrong.
- Is my masturbation compulsive? Does it control me so that I cannot stop? If so, the person has a problem with self-control and needs to regain that. People who get heavily into pornography often need the help of others in an accountability relationship to break that compulsion.
- Does my masturbation interfere with my social life? If a person is turned inward for sexual satisfaction, that will not lead to a strong marriage relationship. In fact, it may lead to disappointment with sexual relations in marriage.
- What is the difference between temptation and sin? In general, temptation is wanting to do something wrong, sin is doing it. Masturbation itself may not be wrong but doing it may lead you to the temptation to do wrong. We ask God in the Lord’s Prayer not to lead us into temptation, but often take ourselves there.

- Is there a final answer for all people at all times? Probably not. It may be that some people can masturbate at some times in their lives and other people cannot. This may be what many people call a matter of “conviction.” People differ in their convictions about what they can wear, what they can spend their money on, and so forth.

None of these things are really good answers about masturbation. Western culture has created a very difficult situation in which people at the height of their sexual desires (at least for the men) are not allowed to marry, so the vast majority of them masturbate as a substitute for sex with their spouses. You may ask, “Is masturbation a sin?”

I really do not know. The Bible simply does not talk about it. It may be that it is one of those things that should be avoided because it may lead to sin. Here are a couple of examples.

- Alcohol. The Bible does not say that drinking alcohol is sinful; in fact, Jesus’ first miracle was turning water into wine—very good wine. However, many people refrain from drinking alcohol for two reasons. First, they do not drink because drinking too much of it leads to drunkenness, which the Bible does condemn as sinful. Second, they do not drink because some people become addicted to it so that they lose their self-control relative to alcohol, becoming alcoholics.
- Movies/Videos. The Bible does not say that movies or videos are sinful; in fact neither of these was even invented at that time. However, many people avoid watching them (at least anything not rated G) for similar reasons. First, they do not watch videos with sexual content because it often leads to sexual fantasy, which may lead to sex with someone outside of marriage. Second, they do not watch it because some people become addicted to pornography so that they lose their self-control.

Likewise, engaging in masturbation may lead to sexual fantasy, which may lead to sex with someone outside of marriage. In addition, some people become compulsive about their

masturbation so that they lose their self-control. This is a situation in which each person has to come to his or her own conclusion about what would be pleasing to God. Our culture has created this difficult situation without creating a clearly good choice, so each individual has to prayerfully reach a conclusion for himself or herself.

As you know from being a TCK, cultures vary widely in their view of masturbation. Since the Bible does not say anything about it, be very careful not to be critical about your host culture’s view, and do not promote as correct any conclusions you come to personally.

## Chapter 13

### Interpersonal Sex

This chapter can begin in much the same way as the last one. In addition to thinking about sex and engaging in some kind of solitary sexual activity, most adolescents engage in some kind of sexual activity with others. Like other young adults, adolescents have the drive to express their sexuality as a part of the sexual maturity that comes with puberty. However, since they cannot marry, that expression takes place in other ways before marriage. In the next two chapters we will continue to consider the most common sexual behaviors of adolescents, what the Bible has to say about each, and what Christians have to say about each.

#### Petting

Dating as a way of choosing a spouse was invented as part of the creation of adolescence. Before adolescence parents generally picked spouses for their children and made arrangements for the marriage. That seemed to be the logical thing to do since parents should have the best interests of their children at heart, and the parents had lived in a marriage relationship so knew what it took to make a good marriage partner. As mentioned earlier in the book, parents made the arrangements, then when the children came of age, they could accept or reject those arrangements. This is still the way it is for about 60% of the teenagers in the world.

After the invention of adolescence, the choice of the marriage partner went to the adolescents themselves. Not having lived in a marriage relationship, the new adolescents had to

develop some other basis for making the choice of a spouse. Dating was developed as a way to get to know other people by doing fun things together, and by the 1920s petting had become an accepted and expected part of the dating relationship. Reporting the results of their research at the middle of the twentieth century Alfred Kinsey and his associates noted that over the forty years on which they had data, no other aspects of female sexual behavior in America had changed as much as petting and premarital sex. The greatest change was in the generation born in the first decade of the century, and petting became more and more prevalent through the 1950s. They pointed out that it was a clear-cut instance of social factors influencing sexual behavior.

The general idea of petting was to arouse each other sexually through touch without going on to have sexual intercourse. Although no generally agreed on definitions emerged for different types of petting, such definitions usually hinged on whether the petting was above or below the waist and inside or outside the clothing. During the first half of the century only about one-third of the females and two-thirds of the males reported participating in petting anywhere on the body and inside the clothing, but by 1975 about three-fourth of both reported such petting.

The Bible does not say anything about petting by unmarried adolescents. However, it does have one verse about a married couple petting. “And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife” (Genesis 26:8 KJV). Not wanting to be too graphic, those translators 400 years ago called it “sporting.” Most modern versions call it “caressing” or “petting.”

If you looked out the window today and saw a man and woman “sporting,” would your first thought be that they must be a married couple? This was Abimelech’s reaction in the next verse: “And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, behold, of a surety, she is thy wife: And how saidst thou, she is my sister?” (Genesis 26:9), KJV). He had concluded that Rebekah was not Isaac’s sister, and

he assumed that Isaac would not be fondling someone other than his wife.

Since the Bible is silent on this subject, Christians have a wide spectrum of views. Some Christians present petting in a positive light. Lewis Smedes in his book, *Sex for Christians*, said, “Petting can be a delicately tuned means of mutual discovery....it can be a process in which two people explore each other’s feelings with no intention of having intercourse....it is an adventure in personal understanding and intimacy that calls for control and discipline.” That may be possible, but it rarely (if ever) happens with today’s adolescents. Note that Smedes said “can be” and “calls for control and discipline.” Usually it is not, and usually the control is not present either.

Other Christians say that virtually all physical contact is wrong. Herbert Miles in his book, *Sexual Understanding before Marriage*, said, “Often young people try to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable petting. Holding hands and ‘relatively unstimulating kissing and embracing’...If we are going to face truth unequivocally—and face the truth we must—it is necessary to state bluntly that there is no such thing as unstimulating kissing and embracing.” He seems to say that holding hands is all right, but kissing, embracing, and anything more intimate is not.

### Other Cultural Phenomena

As TCKs you know that cultures vary on many things. Not only do cultures vary, but different locations in the same country may vary widely as well. Just as an Indiana farm boy may come from a culture quite different from a suburban California girl, so may cultures in other countries vary from one part to another. Here are some things that currently vary from place to place across and within cultures.

- Gestures and other nonverbal behavior. When moving from culture to culture people are usually cautioned about gestures made with their hands. A gesture which means

“OK” in one culture may be a sexually obscene gesture in another. Whether or not you look someone in the eye, or even a raised eyebrow, may have quite different meanings from culture to culture.

- Clothing. How you dress sends sexual messages in all cultures. Clothing considered modest in one culture may signal sexual promiscuity in another. Different parts of the body are kept covered in various cultures.
- Bracelets. Accessories to clothing also may signal sexual availability. Currently in the United States the “jelly bracelets” of the 1980s have that meaning in some places, but not in others. Available everywhere from boutiques to discount stores, they are called “sex bracelets” or “snap bracelets” in some parts of the country because of what they mean and what people do. In some places a female wears a particular color to indicate what sexual activity she wants, and when a male “snaps” (breaks) it off her wrist, it means he is interested in that as well.
- Dancing. High school dances in many places have overt sexual meanings. Here are some quotes from the dancing policy of a nearby high school. “Dances which are prohibited are dances in which the male stands behind the female, with his groin pressed against her buttocks, simulating intercourse. It also includes dancing in which partners face one another, press their bodies against each other and simulate rhythmic sexual intercourse. It also includes lines of dancers, pressed against each other, simulating multiple partner sexual intercourse.”
- “Dating.” Although teens today do not “date” as previous generations have done, they still have ways of getting to know each other. One way is “hanging out.” Rather than the guy asking the gal to go on a date that he plans and pays for, they just spend time doing something together. It is not specifically aimed at courtship or marriage, just a fun time together. Another way is “hooking up.” After a party where people have just been hanging out, couples may go

off by themselves and “hook up.” This phrase refers to having sexual intercourse with someone you have just met and perhaps do not ever expect to meet again. There is no commitment to further contact, and both people try to not “catch feelings” (become emotionally involved).

### Intercourse

When “petting” is done by married people, it is often called “foreplay” because it naturally leads up to sexual intercourse. The idea of sexually arousing each other and then not continuing on to have intercourse does not make logical sense, and it often does not end that way in real life. Becoming sexually aroused and stopping before having intercourse is very frustrating in the long run, and most people who engage in heavy petting sooner or later wind up having intercourse even though they are not married.

- Before 1965 in the USA about 10% of the women and about 25% of the men had sex by the time they graduated from high school. By the time they graduated from college about 25% of the women and about 55% of the men had sex. (Catherine Chilman, 1980, *Adolescent Sexuality in a Changing American Society*, US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Publication No. 80-1426)
- By 1973, about 35% of the women and about 35% of the men had sex by the time they graduated from high school. By the time they graduated from college about 65% of the women and 85% men had sex. (Chilman, 1980)
- In 2002, about 70% of the women and 60% of the men had sexual intercourse by the age 18 (usual age of high school graduation). By the age 22-24 (usual age of college graduation) about 90% of both men and women had sexual intercourse. This data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control was released in September 2005 and is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/ad/361-370/ad362.htm>

- The cover story of the May 2005 issue of *Christianity Today* noted that three surveys of single Christians in the 1990s found that about two-thirds of the respondents had sex. (Note that these surveys were of Christians, not the general public, as was the case on the previous three points.)

As you might expect, the Bible does not have much to say about sex and unmarried adults (adolescents) because teenagers could marry. However, it does have a few passages. In the Old Testament when Joseph was an unmarried teenage (17 when he began working) TCK, his boss’s wife asked him to have sex with her. He replied, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God” (Genesis 39:9 KJV). This was not just a single temptation, but she repeatedly asked him to go to bed with her; however, he refused and wisely avoided even being with her. One day when they happened to be alone in the house, she even grabbed his jacket and asked him to go to bed with her—he wisely slipped out of his jacket and ran out of the house.

When the Apostle Paul, a New Testament TCK, wrote to answer some questions, he noted that celibacy was good but went on to say, “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2 KJV), and he went on to encourage husbands and wives to have regular sexual intercourse. The word “fornication” is usually translated “immorality” in modern versions and may refer to a variety of illicit sexual activities, but it clearly refers to sex by unmarried individuals in this case.

Paul wrote to another church, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (1 Thessalonians 4:3 KJV). He tells them that they should be holy, that they should not have sex before marriage. He goes on to tell them to develop self control, literally, that they should learn to acquire a wife or learn to live with their own wife.

## Homosexual Behavior

There is much more talk about homosexual behavior than there is actual homosexual activity. A minority of adolescents even experiment with it, and a much smaller minority make it a lifestyle (perhaps 1 woman in 100 and 2 men in 100). The homosexual activists are a very vocal minority, but most teens do not become involved. This brief section is important because most people believe such activity is more common than it really is.

The Bible has about half a dozen verses prohibiting homosexual behavior. This activity is mentioned in the major passages on sexuality in the Old Testament (particularly Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13) and in the New Testament (particularly 1 Corinthians 6:9). A passage mentioning both male and female homosexual behavior is Romans 1:26-27.

Unfortunately, not all TCKs were as sexually pure as Joseph and Paul. Lot was a TCK born in Ur; however, Lot lived with his grandfather (Terah) and his Uncle Abram after his father died. Soon the whole family settled in Haran where Lot spent some of his developmental years. After Grandpa died, Abram was called by God to leave his country and his culture, so Abram and Lot moved to Canaan, then to Egypt, then back to Canaan again. However, soon they were so wealthy that the land could not support them together, so Uncle Abe gave Lot his choice of where to live. Lot chose to live down along the Jordan River near Sodom, and soon Lot moved into the city of Sodom. (Genesis 12-14).

One evening while Lot was sitting at the city gates, two angels arrived at the city, and Lot invited them home to have dinner and to spend the night. However, before bedtime young and old men from all over the city surrounded Lot's house and demanded that Lot send the visitors out so the Sodomites could have sex with them (the reason homosexual behavior is often called sodomy). Lot refused but offered to give his own daughters to the men outside to do whatever the Sodomites wanted with them (Genesis 19). How could he do such a thing? Even though he had

been raised by Abram, Lot had chosen to live near a sinful place and later moved into it. The values of those you live with often ultimately become your own values.

## Sexual Abuse

TCKs sometimes experience sexual abuse. Lot's daughters were also TCKs. They probably lived some of their developmental years while Lot and Abram were moving between Canaan and Egypt. However, even if they were not born until Lot had settled in Sodom, they were still living in one culture at home with Lot but surrounded by another culture in Sodom. Living among these people day after day, Lot was deeply distressed by what he saw and heard (2 Peter 2:8), but the Sodomites' values slowly became his as well. Lot's daughters barely escaped sexual abuse by the nationals living around them—primarily because those nationals were interested in homosexual relations. However, TCKs today sometimes find themselves the victims of sexual abuse by nationals.

Sexual relations also sometimes occur between family members. This may be between adults and their own offspring or the offspring of relatives. More often it is between adolescents and their siblings or cousins. No one is sure just how often this occurs because it is still regarded by most people as shameful and seldom reported. However, sometimes TCKs live in close-knit expatriate communities where all adults are called aunts and uncles. When sex occurs between TCKs and this "family," the same dynamics of shame and secrecy can occur. Although the Bible does not have many passages on incest, the ones in Leviticus 18 and 20 are very specific. They list all of the relatives with whom one should not have sexual relations.

Unfortunately Lot is an example of a TCK who was involved sexually with his own TCK daughters. His daughters were probably teenage TCKs at the time since they were still virgins but pledged to be married. Since their husbands-to-be were both killed when Sodom was destroyed, the two daughters came up

with the idea that they could preserve the family line by having sex with their own father. How could they do such a thing? The values of those around you can become your own values. Alcohol is often involved in sexual sin today, and such was the case with Lot. Drunk one night he had sex with his older daughter, and drunk the next night, he had sex with his younger daughter. Both of his daughters were pregnant by their father (Genesis 19). It is little wonder that the older daughter named her son Moab, “from father.” Ironically Lot carried out his proposal to the Sodomites (sex with his daughters) himself!

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

Having to make decisions about such things as petting and sex before marriage is largely a result of the invention of adolescence. A couple hundred years ago marriages were arranged and teenagers could marry, so such decisions were not necessary. However, we live in a culture which does not allow you to marry when you become sexually mature, so here are some suggestions for the things discussed in this chapter.

Since the Bible does not mention petting by sexually mature people who were not married, and since Christians do not agree about it, consider the following.

- Before beginning to date (or immediately if you are already dating), discuss with some evangelical Christian adults about how far to go in expressing yourself physically. Choose adults in whom you have confidence, such as parents, pastors, teachers, or counselors at school.
- If you later want to change those limits, again discuss the changes with the same person(s) if possible. Don’t look for someone else who you think will set other limits.
- If you start “dating” or “hanging out” with one person regularly, talk with that person relatively early in your relationship about how far you want to go as a couple.
- Write down the parts of your body you will let the other person touch as well as the parts of their body you will

touch. Reach this conclusion while you are thinking clearly—your brain does not function well when the hormones are flowing.

- Learn other ways of showing affection to that particular person, such as a wink, a raised eyebrow, a particular smile, or a particular gesture.
- Avoid being alone with the other person, alone in a house, in a car, on a hike, and so forth.
- “Hang out” with a group or “double date.”
- Plan your times together so that you are not trying to think of something to do at the last minute.

There is no way anyone can write a general set of suggestions about what I have called “Other Cultural Phenomena.” Gestures, clothing, behaviors, and such things vary from culture to culture, change from time to time within any culture, and are different in various places in the same culture. What I described were a few things that are true of some parts of the United States in the spring of 2005, and by the time you read this they may be quite different.

The only way to cope with these things is to find someone to be your “mentor” or “advisor” in the particular place, time, and culture in which you find yourself. This is true whether you are entering your host culture or your passport culture. This person needs to warn you about things before you enter the culture as well as watch you while you are in that culture. No one can think of all of the things that may have sexual meanings, but he or she can spot them when you do them.

Since the Bible does mention having sex before marriage, the simple answer here is, “Don’t.” However, some suggestions may help you say, “No,” so that you do not have sex before marriage.

- Carefully and prayerfully set your limits on petting. People usually don’t go directly from not even touching to having intercourse. Touching each other naturally leads to sex, so set your limits to keep from starting down that slide which results in having sex.



- Commit yourself to remaining a virgin. Many adolescents participate in a ceremony and/or wear a pin or a ring to remind themselves of their commitment.
- Maintain your relationship with Jesus Christ. The thing that has the greatest effect on keeping teenagers from premarital sex is a personal commitment to Christ.
- Do not date unbelievers. Although some churchgoing adolescents do have sex before marriage, the percentage is less than those who do not have any commitment to Christ. Therefore, you are less likely to be pressured to have sex.
- Remember that there is no “safe sex.” Some Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs, discussed in the next chapter) are curable; others are just something that will hinder you for the rest of your life, and still others are terminal.
- Remember that having intercourse with someone changes your relationship forever. It is unethical for psychologists to counsel anyone with whom they have engaged in sexual intimacies. Having sex changes things—forever.
- Don’t fall for the lines, “We’re in love,” “We plan to get married,” or even “We’re engaged.” Heather Jamison wrote an article in *Focus on the Family* in 1999, telling how premarital sex with her husband-to-be nearly led to their divorce several years into their marriage. Though neither of them had sex with anyone else before marriage, both became suspicious of the other.

Although having sex before marriage sounds like a logical way to find out if you are sexually compatible (made for each other), it just does not work. Study after study has shown that people who have sex with each other before marriage are less satisfied with sex in marriage and more likely to divorce than are couples who do not have sex before marriage.

## Chapter 14

### Sex or not Sex?

During the last ten or fifteen years many studies have found that the percentage of teenagers reporting they have had sex is decreasing. The Centers for Disease Control found that it had decreased by about 10% between 1990 and 2000. Likewise, the number of abortions by teens has also dropped during the same time period. Teen pregnancies are also down by about 10%. In late 2004 the CDC reported that the number of births to young adolescents had dropped greatly: Between 1994 and 2002, the number of girls between 10 and 14 had increased by 16%, but the number of births to women in this age group had decreased by 38%.

A 2002 cover of *Newsweek* magazine proclaimed “The New Virginité.” Articles about the return to abstinence among adolescents appeared in many magazines and newspapers. All looked good until some people pointed out that research also showed that the number of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among adolescents were at all time highs. A 2005 article in *Reader’s Digest* noted that gonorrhea was more prevalent among 15-19-year-old females than any other group in the population.

How could this be? If fewer adolescents were having sex and more of them were abstinent, how could they be getting more STDs? The answer is found in the postmodern thinking of many adolescents. Remember that in a postmodern perspective each person constructs his or her own truth and reality. Thus, when asked whether or not they have had sex, postmodern adolescents answer based on their own definition of “having sex.” In the past

people considered vaginal sex, oral sex, and other kinds of sex as “having sex.” However, now people all have their own definitions, and many of them define sex only as having vaginal sex. Other kinds of sex are not sex. (If the previous sentence does not make sense to you, you are not a postmodern thinker.)

Probably the most common (but certainly not universal) definition of “having sex” is “doing something a person believes can result in pregnancy.” Anything else you do is not having sex. For example, when discussing masturbation, we considered Onan who “knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother’s wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother” (Genesis 38:9 KJV). Apparently Onan believed that if he did not ejaculate his semen into the widow, she could not become pregnant; therefore, in postmodern thinking Onan did not have sex with her. (Of course, she could become pregnant because sperm may get into the vagina without ejaculation—as some adolescents have found out when they became pregnant even though they never “had sex.”)

This kind of thinking has resulted in adolescents engaging in a wide variety of sexual activities that they do not define as having sex. One kind of sexual activity, often defined as not “having sex,” but more and more frequently participated in by adolescents in America, is oral sex.

### Oral Sex

Although a small minority of adolescents participated in oral sex in past years, the percentage has increased dramatically during the last decade. Reporting the White House scandal of the Clinton administration, the media made “oral sex” a common phrase which quickly found its way into the vocabulary of adolescents and even into conversations of students in elementary school. Knowing that the President did it and said it was not sex, these teenagers and children increasingly tried it and view it as “no big deal.” It is seen not as a question of “having sex,” but as a question of deciding how much petting to do: Should I hold hands?

Should I kiss? Should I touch a person’s breasts? Should I touch a person’s genitals? Should I have oral sex?

Data are only beginning to appear as to how many teens have oral sex and by what age. Data from an NBC/*People* magazine poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates on a national sample of 1000 13-16-year-old teens were released in January 2005. This poll found that in the entire sample 12% of the teens had been involved in oral sex. At age 13 about 3% of the people had oral sex, and then the percentages increased with each year. In another study data from 580 9<sup>th</sup> graders with an average age of 14.5 in two California schools published in the journal *Pediatrics* in April 2005 showed that about one in five (19.6%) reported having had oral sex and about one in three (31.5%) reported intending to have oral sex during the next six months.

Both of these studies showed that adolescents were more likely to have oral sex than vaginal sex. The most comprehensive study of USA sexual behavior ever done was released by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in September 2005 and is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/ad/361-370/ad362.htm>. This study found that at every age level during the late teens about an additional 10% (ranged from 8%-15%) of both men and women had oral sex (but had not had vaginal sex).

Teenagers see oral sex as more acceptable and less risky. However, there is no “safe sex” outside of a faithful marriage relationship, and teenagers who participate in oral sex before they are married experience the social, emotional, and physical consequences. Although teenagers try to avoid “getting feelings,” emotional attachments occur, relationships change, and “breaking up” still is emotionally devastating. Spiritual consequences also occur as teens disobey God’s commands about sexual purity. Although teens may believe they cannot contract STDs, they still get them. Remember that the highest rate of gonorrhea for any group is found in females 15-19 years of age.

## Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Although the use of condoms is sometimes called “safe sex,” it is not safe. It may be “safer” in the sense that you are less likely to get STDs, but you can still get them—as many teenagers have found. Although some STDs can be relatively easily cured, others last for life, and AIDS takes your life after a long process of dying. A 2002 editorial in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* was titled “Oral-sex education: Give middle schoolers facts to curtail activity.” Although one can catch dozens of STDs, the editorial said, “Among the STDs spread through oral sex are pharyngeal gonorrhea, herpes, hepatitis B, syphilis, chlamydia, and human papillomavirus. HIV also can be transmitted orally, though transmission is more likely through intercourse.” The consequences of just these few STDs are astounding.

- **Gonorrhea.** About 700,000 people in the USA get gonorrhea each year. If not treated, it can lead to internal abscesses and long-lasting, chronic pelvic pain and can damage a woman’s fallopian tubes enough to cause infertility. In men, untreated gonorrhea can cause a painful condition of the testicles that can lead to infertility. Some types of gonorrhea are easy to treat, but others are resistant to treatment.
- **Herpes.** Nationwide, at least 45 million people ages 12 and older (one out of five adolescents and adults) have had a genital herpes infection. Herpes can cause recurrent flu-like symptoms as well as painful genital sores in many adults as well as potentially fatal infections in babies. There is no treatment that can cure herpes, but antiviral medications can shorten outbreaks during the period of time the person takes the medication.
- **Hepatitis B.** Since the introduction of a vaccine to prevent it in the early 1980s, the number of new cases each year has declined to about 75,000 in the USA. However, about a million and a quarter have chronic hepatitis B, and a quarter of those will die from it.

- **Syphilis.** Although it almost disappeared in the last half of the twentieth century, syphilis is coming back so that about 30,000 new cases appear each year. In the late stages of syphilis, it may damage the internal organs, including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints. This internal damage which may show up many years after infection includes difficulty coordinating muscle movements, paralysis, numbness, gradual blindness, dementia, and death. Syphilis is easily treatable with a massive dose of penicillin (or other antibiotic) given as a single injection, but many people do not even know they have it.
- **Chlamydia.** The most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the United States, chlamydia infects an estimated 2.8 million Americans each year. In women, untreated infection can spread into the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This happens in up to 40% of women with untreated chlamydia. PID can cause permanent damage to the fallopian tubes, uterus, and surrounding tissues. It is easily treated with antibiotics, but many people are not treated because they have no symptoms.
- **Human Papillomavirus.** Approximately 20 million people are currently infected with HPV. At least 50% of sexually active men and women acquire genital HPV infection at some point in their lives, and about 6.2 million Americans get a new genital HPV infection each year. Although there are about 100 different types, some of these viruses are “high-risk” types which may cause abnormal Pap tests. These viruses may lead to cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, anus, or penis. Sexually active women often have an annual Pap test in hopes of catching cervical cancer while it is in a curable stage.
- **HIV.** Everyone had heard of the millions of people worldwide who are HIV positive and will develop AIDS which is incurable and results in death. Having any of the

STDs mentioned above as well as many others dramatically increases one's chances of becoming HIV positive, and one can become HIV positive by having oral sex.

Further information on these STDs as well as others is available at [www.cdc.gov/std](http://www.cdc.gov/std). Fact sheets available there all end with the same statement: "The surest way to avoid transmission of sexually transmitted diseases is to abstain from sexual intercourse or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected."

### What can adolescent TCKs do?

What can I say? All I know to say is "Don't." Rather than elaborating on that myself as an older, retired person, let me quote the words of a college student. The following paragraph was written by the editor of a special issue on sexuality for the student newspaper at a Christian college.

Students are not sure where to draw the line, so they are doing other things just to avoid having vaginal sex... So many people have no idea that oral sex and even sexual touching can lead to STDs. When \_\_\_\_\_, a nurse at the campus clinic told me that sexual touching could lead to herpes, human papillomavirus and even syphilis, I was shocked. I tried to dispel the rumor that everything BUT vaginal sex is safe. In all reality, the only thing oral or anal sex does is reduce the risk of pregnancy. I hope that the many hours of research I have done will help students to realize that any type of sexual contact is not only physically dangerous but could also be emotionally scarring.

Even if you are planning to marry, and even if you are engaged, "Don't." Remember that Heather Jamison ("Bitter for Sweet," *Focus on the Family*, February, 1999, p. 12) wrote about how she and her husband-to-be engaged in sexual activity before they were married using the excuse that God would forgive them and they would marry. God did forgive, and they married;

however, the trust necessary to build a marriage was gone. As she put it, "The divorce was mutually accepted, and then some months later, on the date it was to become final, mutually revoked. We had both tasted firsthand the consequences of sin: the lack of intimacy, trust and respect for each other" (Quote Data) She went on to say that although she could not change the past, day after day, year after year, layer after layer the Lord continued to restore trust and respect. How she wished they had waited.

### Concluding Comments on Part 4

Compared to other chapters, these four chapters in Part 4 have been by far the most difficult to write. The difficult part was not in discussing sexual topics (I did that for 35 years while teaching psychology), but it was realizing that the suggestions given at the end of these four chapters are quite inadequate. There are just no good answers to the question of what to do with your sexuality during adolescence. With your new cognitive capacities as an adolescent/adult, I can encourage you to use them and go on to become great critical thinkers. With your new physical strength and stamina, I can encourage you to use those to go on to become record setting athletes. With your new capacity to make moral decisions, I can encourage you to use that capacity to make wise choices when faced with temptations. However, with your new sexual capacities, as a Christian I cannot encourage you to express that new capacity for the next ten years of your life.

As you know from living in several cultures, these cultures often place odd demands on the people living in them. At least the demands seem odd to those living outside the culture. You may think that the puberty rites practiced by "primitive" cultures are odd, but probably none are as odd as not giving newly sexually mature people a morally acceptable way to express their newfound sexuality. Do remember that even though this is odd and probably unreasonable, that does not mean that it is all right to become sexually intimate before marriage.

Finally, although this is not a book on marriage, sex is very much a part of marriage after adolescence. Your being a TCK will influence your relationship in marriage, and thus your sexual life as an adult. The book of Ruth is a treasury of information on TCKs and marriage. You may have never heard of them, but Mahlon and Kilion were TCKs who had been born in Judah but grew up in Moab. As is often the case, these TCKs married nationals, Orpah and Ruth, in the culture where they grew up (Ruth 1).

About ten years later Mahlon and Kilion died. When their mother, Naomi, decided to return to her passport country, Orpah and Ruth wanted to go with her. Naomi explained some of the differences in the cultures, especially noting that she had no more sons—remember Onan not wanting to fulfill that part of his culture when his brother died (Genesis 38). After some discussion Orpah decided to stay in Moab, her passport country, but Ruth decided to go to Judah with her mother-in-law. Ruth had really adopted her husband's culture and religion, so she said, "Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1).

Before you marry, I recommend that you learn all you can about your "TCK-ness" and consider what it will mean to the person you marry. Will marrying you mean moving from country to country? Staying in one place?

- Some TCKs marry each other since they are both a combination of cultures.
- Other TCKs, like Mahlon and Kilion, marry nationals in their host country where they spent their teen years
- Other TCKs, like Joseph who spent most of their teen years in their passport countries, also marry nationals in their host country.
- Still others, like Moses marry people from their passport country, people who are not TCKs.

Whatever the case I suggest reading a good book on TCKs, such as *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing up Among Worlds* (2001) by David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken, and discussing it with your potential marriage partner. If at all possible

also discuss these differences as a couple with a pastor or counselor who understands TCK issues as well as other issues in marriage.

Finally, I want to suggest some good books about adolescent sexuality from a Christian perspective. Some of these books deal very frankly with the issues discussed in Part 4. You can read about the books on the publisher's website, and if you want to see the table of contents and some sample pages from the books, you can find those at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

First, here are some books that are parts of sex education age-graded series published by Christian publishers: Learning About Sex Series published by Concordia Publishing House ([www.cph.org](http://www.cph.org))

- *How You Are Changing* by Jane Graver, 1998, (Book 3, for people 8-11 years of age in grades 3-6).
- *Sex and the New You* by Rich Bimler, 1998, (Book 4, for people 11-14 years of age in grades 5-8).
- *Love, Sex, and God* by Bill Ameiss & Jane Graver, 1998, (Book 5, for people 14 years of age to young adults in high school through college).

God's Design for Sex Series published by NavPress ([www.navpress.com](http://www.navpress.com)) :

- *What's the Big Deal?: Why God Cares About Sex* by Stan & Brenna Jones, 1995, (Book 3, for people 8-11 years of age in grades 3-6).
- *Facing the Facts: The Truth About Sex and You* by Stan & Brenna Jones, 1995, (Book 4, for people 11-14 years of age in grades 5-8).

Second, here are some more recent (written or revised since 2000) books for adolescents about the issues discussed in Part 4 that are not parts of a series (presented alphabetically):

- *And the Bride Wore White: Seven Secrets to Sexual Purity* by Dannah Gresh, 2004, published by Moody Publishers ([www.moodypublishers.com](http://www.moodypublishers.com)).

- *Boy Meets Girl: Say Hello to Courtship* by Joshua Harris, 2005, published by Multnomah Publishers ([www.multnomahbooks.com](http://www.multnomahbooks.com)).
- *Every Young Man's Battle: Strategies for Victory in the Real World of Sexual Temptation* by Steve Arterburn & Fred Stoeker, 2004, published by Waterbrook Press ([www.waterbrookpress.com](http://www.waterbrookpress.com)).
- *Every Young Woman's Battle: Guarding your Mind, Heart, and Body in a Sex-Saturated World* by Shannon Etheridge and Steve Arterburn, 2004, published by Waterbrook Press ([www.waterbrookpress.com](http://www.waterbrookpress.com)).
- *I Kissed Dating Goodbye: A New Attitude toward Romance and Relationships* by Joshua Harris, 2003, published by Multnomah Publishers ([www.multnomahbooks.com](http://www.multnomahbooks.com)).
- *Not Even a Hint: Guarding Your Heart against Lust* by Joshua Harris, 2003, published by Multnomah Publishers ([www.multnomahbooks.com](http://www.multnomahbooks.com)).
- *Sex Has a Price Tag: Discussions about Sexuality, Spirituality, and Self Respect* by Pam Stenzel, 2003, published by Zondervan ([www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)).
- *She's HOT, He's HOT: What to Look for in the Opposite Sex* by Jeramy & Jerusha Clark, 2001, published by Waterbrook Press ([www.waterbrookpress.com](http://www.waterbrookpress.com)).

## Part 5

### Work Forbidden/School Required

Although the loss of identity and the forbidding of marriage are probably the two most important aspects of the invention of adolescence, this whole cultural phenomenon has many other implications. Turning adults into children influenced every part of teenagers' lives. In these final chapters we will consider three other aspects of adolescence.

First, to turn teenagers from adults into children (adolescents), western culture passed laws against their working to support themselves and made them dependent on their parents. We will look at this in Chapter 15

Second, these newly created children were unemployed and getting into trouble, and adults felt that it was unfair to expect children to obey adult laws, so they created juvenile delinquency. Basically a delinquent act was defined as an act that would be a crime if an older person did it. We will look at this in Chapter 16.

Finally, since these newly created children were not allowed to work, the culture had to find something for them to do, so it invented high school. Then the culture required the adolescents to spend a particular number of hours in school each day for a specific number of days each year.

## Chapter 15

### Child Labor Ended

Throughout most of history people worked regardless of their age. Only during the last couple centuries have some people concluded that children should not work. However, as child labor was prohibited in western culture, the prohibitions extended from childhood through the teen years, and adolescents were also forbidden to work.

#### Bible Times

When people think of children working in the Bible, they probably most often think of David the shepherd boy out caring for sheep. When he came to Jesse's home near Bethlehem to anoint the man who was to be the next king, the prophet Samuel asked to see Jesse's sons. One by one Jesse called in his sons, but the Lord had not chosen any of them. Finally, when Samuel asked if that was all, Jesse said, "The youngest is out tending the sheep." Even his own father did not think he was old enough to be considered—and he was only a shepherd, a low-class job (1 Samuel 16).

Soon after that when his father sent him to take some treats and see how his older brothers were doing, David arrived just as the soldiers were preparing for battle. David heard Goliath taunting his brothers and the other soldiers. When David criticized them for not fighting and offered to fight by himself, even the King said, "You can't fight him, you are only a boy." David pointed out that while tending sheep he had killed lions and bears, and he could do the same to Goliath. How many "children" today could

say such a thing. Most Sunday school children know the story of how the "boy" David used his sling to kill Goliath (1 Samuel 17).

Joseph, a TCK, was a teenager (17 years old) when his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. When his owner, the captain of the guard in the palace, observed Joseph's work he promoted him. Before long Joseph was in charge of everything his owner had, so that the only thing the owner had to be concerned about was choosing what he ate. Not bad for a teenage TCK! (Genesis 39).

Joseph was falsely accused and put in prison. However, when he observed Joseph's work there, the warden put Joseph in charge of the entire prison—all the prisoners there. Joseph was given the responsibility for everything that was done in the prison so that the warden did not have to worry about anything there. Not bad for a young TCK! (Genesis 39).

By the time he was 30, Joseph was in charge in the whole land of Egypt. He was wearing Pharaoh's ring, dressed in fine linen robes, wore a gold chain around his neck, and rode in the chariot with Pharaoh. Everyone in Egypt had to do whatever Joseph said. Not bad for someone from a dysfunctional family who had become a TCK as a teenager as a result of being sold into slavery by his brothers only after the oldest one was able to convince them not to kill him!

#### USA Years Ago

Little changed between Bible times and the USA 200 years ago. Here are some quotes from sources 150-200 years ago.

- Although a child started working at the age of six, it was usually at age fourteen that his father decided to choose a calling for him. In the Puritan ethic a calling meant more than a means of gaining a livelihood. God called an individual for a particular occupation by giving him the talent and inclination for it. (The Burlington Court Book, 1705)

- I was put to the grammar school at eight years of age....at ten years old, I was taken home to assist my father in his business, which was that of a tallow chandler and sope-boiler....I continu'd thus employ'd in my father's business for two years, that is till I was 12 years old.... (Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, born in 1706)
- They shall certify that no part of such account is for the support of any male person, over the age of twelve, and under the age of sixty years, while of competent health to labor. (Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1823)
- And that is how in 1850 I got my first real start in life. From the dark cellar running a steam-engine at two dollars a week, begrimed with coal dirt....into paradise, yes heaven, as it seemed to me, with newspapers, pens, pencils, and sunshine about me. (Autobiography, Andrew Carnegie, born in 1835)

Note that as recently as 1823 boys became men at the age of 13. It was against the law to give welfare payments to any young man who was 13, exactly the age that Hebrew boys went through their bar mitzvah and became men able to buy and sell property and so forth. Andrew Carnegie had probably been working a couple years when he got his big break, at age 15!

### USA Today

As adolescence was being invented during the late nineteenth century, changes took place relative to work.

- 1834: 40% of factory workers were children.
- 1842: Two states passed laws limiting working hours for children.
- 1850: Some states prohibited the labor of children 10-12 years old.
- 1869: Knights of Labor (union) formed and worked to prohibit child labor.
- 1900: 61% of men 14-19 years old were employed.

- 1916: Federal child labor law was passed by congress.
- 1918: That child labor law was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
- 1922: AFL (union) called for a Constitutional amendment to stop child labor.
- 1924 "The congress shall have power to limit, regulate, and prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age" (Failed to pass).
- Since then most states have passed laws forbidding labor of those under 16 or 18 years of age.

Thus, people who cared about children, people who wanted to create a labor shortage and drive wages up, and people who wanted efficient labor combined forces to prevent teenagers from working. When the first child labor laws were passed around 1850, they prevented children from working, but the teenage adults could still do so. Just as our culture passed laws to increase the age at which people could marry just as the age of puberty was decreasing, so they passed laws to increase the age at which people could work just as the age at which their bodies grew to adult size and strength decreased.

We now have the situation in which the "new adults" in our society find it illegal to work. Laws meant to protect children now prohibit some adults (the adolescents) from working as other adults do. As the National Commission on Youth (1980, *The Transition of Youth to Adulthood: A Bridge too Long*, 1980, Boulder, CO, Westview, p. 14) said, "Protection has come to mean isolation. Youth are now isolated, restrained, and eventually victimized by the very institutions designed for their protection."

We have a situation in which it is illegal for adolescents to keep part of the fourth commandment "Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Exodus 20:9) given to Moses, a TCK. Of course, we usually emphasize the "not do any work" part of the commandment on one day a week rather than emphasizing working the other six days. Neither can adolescents keep the command of Paul, another TCK, who said, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." Paul urged people to settle down and earn



the food they eat, and not associate with people who do not work—to shame them into working (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

### Managing Money

Since younger adolescents cannot hold jobs to earn money, they often have no means of learning how to manage money and, even more important, how to manage consumer credit. Although taking classes in personal finance may be helpful, the best way to learn anything is to actually do it, and managing money is no exception. There is no good substitute to actually getting money, saving some, giving some, spending some—and running out so that you cannot buy something you really want. It is all theoretical until people find themselves out of money to even go out with their friends. Therefore, I recommend arranging some way to get a “regular” income which has to be used to meet real “expenses” day by day. This may be done by asking parents for an allowance, doing extra things around the house for a “salary,” or working a part-time job outside the home.

Likewise, there is no substitute for actually writing checks on a checking account and charging items on a credit card—then paying for them when the monthly bill comes. Credit cards were invented shortly after adolescence was, and many people still have not learned the discipline necessary to use these cards. In 2001 the average college student had \$1236 in credit card debt, and 22% of all college students had more than \$3000 in such debt. I recommend that teens get a credit card—one that has a spending limit.

### What can adolescents TCKs do?

All adolescents face the restrictions presented above, but adolescent TCKs usually have even more difficulty. Since TCKs in their host country are not citizens and usually do not have the documentation necessary to work, they find it even more difficult to get work. The lists below begin with suggestions that are likely

to work to earn money in either host or passport countries and end with those that are more likely to work in one’s passport country than in the host country. Of course, when in the host country, TCKs may find other expatriates who will pay occasionally for specific tasks.

- Do volunteer work. Help in such places as clinic, school, or children’s home. These experiences are invaluable not only for what you learn, but also in finding out whether or not you like that kind of work.
- Work around home. Everyone has his or her share of chores around home, but parents will often pay for extra work around the house or grounds.
- Work from home. TCKs often have computer skills they can market to people anywhere in the world. When people from the USA call for assistance, they often talk with someone in India or elsewhere in Asia—they could call a knowledgeable TCK anywhere in the world. TCKs can be webmasters for people in their passport countries.
- Work for others in your agency. They often want babysitters from their passport country and are eager to pay either males or females for staying with their children. Those without adolescents may have tasks such as painting they would be glad to pay for.
- Start your own business. You may be able to turn a hobby into a business if you make some “craft” that others would like to have. We know of a TCK who became a photographer for *National Geographic* before going freelance last year.
- Prepare your own resume. Write down your educational experience, work experiences, volunteer experiences and so forth. Even if your resume does not land you a job, it will be most helpful in applying for college.
- Become a student assistant at school.
- Shovel snow, rake leaves, clean houses, walk dogs, wax cars, organize a baby-sitting service etc.
- Do a car wash, bake sale, or hire yourself out for odd jobs.

- Take any “menial” job you are offered—don’t wait for the “perfect” job to come along.
- Do anything you do well. I know several TCKs who went to work for people they had done “internships” with.
- Don’t be picky about exactly what you do or how much you are paid. Experience and contacts are often worth more than money.
- Develop good work habits such as getting yourself out of bed in the morning, arriving promptly (or early), doing more than you have to do, not goofing off on company time, etc.
- Take vocational training classes to develop marketable skills, such as word processing and other computer skills, wood working, engine repair, etc.
- Practice interviewing—the interview is often the deciding factor in getting a job.
- Find a “TCK buddy” with whom you can do some of the suggestions above.

When it comes to learning how to manage money, other than learning more than one economic system, TCKs have about the same opportunities as adolescents living in the passport countries all their lives. Here are some suggestions.

- Open bank accounts, both savings and checking.
- Get a credit card and learn how to use it wisely—many offer a small percentage of your purchases back.
- Learn how to balance your checking account and to verify your credit card bills. Identity theft happens to children and adolescents as well as other people.
- Learn how to comparison shop for the best merchandise and prices. Such information used to be available only in consumer magazines, but now it is widely available on the web. Search engines will find the best prices for you by comparing prices on the Internet.
- Ask your parents to share their finances with you. You probably know that they had to raise \$50,000 or more per

- year or that their salary is \$100,000 a year—but you will be surprised how little money they have to spend as they wish.
- Read what the Bible has to say about money, poverty, and wealth.
- Set up a budget and keep track of how you spend your money so that you will know where it is going.
- Ask your parents to “pay” you the money for your clothing, shoes, school lunches, etc. if you are not able to learn money. Learn how to budget your “pay” so that you get all these things when you need them.
- Read a book on personal finance—many Christian ones are available.
- Remember about giving to your church and to the needy.
- Ask your parents to see an income tax return. Many TCKs do not even know what one looks like, and you will want to be able to file one when you are back in your passport country working even part time—get that refund of hundreds of dollars!

## Chapter 16

### Juvenile Delinquency Begun

Before the twentieth century there were no juvenile delinquents, only criminals. The invention of juvenile delinquency is a part of our creation of adolescence. Teenagers who were working and married were considered adults and legally held responsible for their actions for thousands of years. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, western culture concluded that these “children” should not be held responsible for their actions, at least not to the same extent as older adults.

#### Bible Times

Joseph is also good example of a teenage TCK held responsible for his “criminal” acts when his boss’s wife framed him. One day when they were alone in the house, she wanted sex with him. She grabbed his coat asked him to go to bed with her. However, he ran out of the house, leaving her holding his coat. When she realized she had been scorned and still had his coat, she called other employees who were outside and told a story that would certainly be believed by anyone who had seen Joseph running from the house. She said that he had tried to rape her, but she screamed. When he heard her scream for help, he was in such a hurry to get out of the house that he left his coat beside her (Genesis 39).

When her husband came home, she told him the same concocted story. “That Hebrew who works for us came and tried to rape me, but when I screamed for help, he ran out so fast that he

left his coat.” Of course, the other employees confirmed her story. Her husband was furious and had Joseph put in prison. Since boys became men when they became teenagers, Joseph was fully responsible under the criminal law of his host country.

Another example is Jehoiachin who became a TCK because of his being taken prisoner. Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became King of Judah. Just three months into his reign as king, the King of Babylon invaded Judah and took Jehoiachin and many others in his family to Babylon as political prisoners. Again it made no difference that he was a teenager—he was treated as an adult, as were all other teenagers of the day.

#### USA Years Ago

Laws have distinguished between children and adults for thousands of years based on the “age of responsibility.” Under English common law 800 years ago, children under seven could not commit crimes and those under 14 could not be punished for crimes unless someone could show that those 13 and below could distinguish right from wrong, intended to do wrong, and understood the consequences of what they did. People 14 and older were treated as adults.

Of course much American law was based on English common law, so the laws in the USA were much the same. However, it did not seem logical to hold the “children” (adolescents) legally responsible for their behavior if they were not treated as adults in other areas. Someone came up with the idea of treating adolescents in a system separate from other adults, a system that emphasized treatment (or reformation) rather than punishment. The logic was that if this was done when people were teenagers, then crime would soon be stamped out.

Juvenile delinquency was officially invented with the passage of the Juvenile Court Act by the Illinois legislature in 1899. In that act a “delinquent child” was defined as “any child under the age of 16 years who violates the law of this State or any City or Village ordinance.” Of course, at that time (1899) 16 was

about the age at which boys passed through puberty. This law created separate proceedings for children and adults.

Unfortunately, as with other aspects of adolescence, as the age of puberty decreased, the maximum age for juvenile delinquency increased.

### USA Today

Other states soon followed, and people saw the juvenile justice system as great progress. Juvenile courts were to reform, not punish; to uplift, not degrade; to develop, not crush; and to make worthy citizens, not criminals. Here are some of the developments during the last century.

- 1905. When Pennsylvania's Justice Brown ruled its juvenile act constitutional, he sounded almost religious when he said it was "for the salvation of children." It was "the way by which the state undertakes to save...all children under a certain age, whose salvation may become the duty of the state."
- 1968. The Uniform Juvenile Court Act was written and approved by the American Bar Association. In it a "child" was a person who was "(1) under the age of 18 years; or (2) under the age of 21 years who committed an act of delinquency before reaching the age of 18 years."
- 1980. The National Commission on Youth noted that youth arrests for violent crime (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) were climbing nearly twice as fast as for all crime. The most arrested group in the nation was 18-year-olds, second was 17-year-olds, then 19-year-olds, followed by 16-year-olds.
- 1981. 14-year-old David Keeler of Dallas killed his parents with a shotgun and was sent to a private psychiatric center because he could not be tried for murder under Texas law. December 29, 1984, he was released on his eighteenth birthday and eligible for his share of their \$2.1 million estate.

- 2005. The Supreme Court ruled that people who were juveniles when they committed the crime could not receive the death penalty—and all those on death row had their sentences changed to life in prison.

Toward the end of the twentieth century many people were beginning to agree with Senator Alexander Wiley who testified before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency in 1955. He said, "To me when I see the youth of this country in idleness, walking the streets of the cities, [I feel] we are meeting a challenge to our common sense because we know idleness breeds not only crime but everything else." Though they did not (could not) abolish adolescence, many states began to pass laws that allowed juveniles to be tried as adults for some crimes.

Other western nations with adolescence experienced much the same thing. By November 1994 in Elland, England, a 14-year-old young man had been arrested 88 times and convicted of 130 crimes, all within a mile and a half of his home. British law prohibited locking up anyone under 15 years old. Since his fifteenth birthday was very close, he promised to stop. However, in 1995 the law was changed to permit locking up repeat offenders as young as 12.

### Gangs

Not working, little responsibility, "nothing to do," looking for identity, and seeking acceptance, many adolescents join gangs. Most large cities have literally hundreds of gangs including thousands of teenagers, and these gangs meet the needs mentioned above. These gangs often become involved in criminal activity, sometimes even as part of the initiation into the gang. They may be involved in everything from selling drugs, to robbery, to organized crime.

Gangs and their crime used to be considered a large city phenomenon, but they have spread out into many smaller cities and even rural areas. Gang members often hurt not only each other but also innocent people who just happen to be in the area. To give

you some idea of the seriousness of the problem, as I am writing this the U. S. House of Representatives just passed a bill making gang attacks federal crimes. Approved 279-144, the bill authorizes the prosecution of 16-17-year-old gang members in federal courts as adults and extends the statute of limitations from 5 to 15 years for all violent crimes.

### **What can adolescent TCKs do?**

You are probably wondering why this chapter is even in this book. If you have read this far in the book, you are not likely to have murdered your parents or committed any other crime. I do realize that you are probably not juvenile delinquents, but I believe that it is necessary to make sure you realize that Christians must do much more than refrain from breaking the law. As we saw in Chapter 5, by the time you reach adolescence, you are capable of doing more than making your moral decisions only on the basis of keeping the law.

As TCKs you have seen that cultures vary widely in many ways. They vary in terms of what is legal and illegal. For example, prostitution is legal in some countries, usually as long as the prostitutes take periodic screening tests and are free of STDs. In other countries prostitution is a crime, so prostitutes are arrested and spend time in jail. Even if something is legal, cultures vary in terms of what is socially acceptable and unacceptable. For example, in some countries smoking tobacco may be legal and smokers accepted everywhere. In other countries smoking is legal but not socially acceptable so that smokers are relegated to particular rooms or not allowed to smoke in certain buildings. Even if something is legal and socially acceptable, cultures vary in what is considered right and wrong, sinful or not.

Just as the legality and acceptability of activities vary from culture to culture, they also vary from time to time in the same culture. In 1973 psychiatrist Karl Menninger looked at this in his book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* Dr. Menninger noted that the word “sin” had almost disappeared from the the vocabulary of

many people in the USA. He proposed that sins (dealt with by church), often became crimes (dealt with by the legal system), or illnesses (dealt with by the health care system), and then became simply alternate lifestyles.

We can see these changes occurring in the last couple centuries. Homosexual behavior was first considered a sin, and those involved were prayed for. Then some people said there ought to be a law against it, so it became a crime, and people were punished for it. Then it was diagnosed as a mental illness, and people were treated for it. Then in 1973 the American Psychiatric Association said it was not an illness, just a different way of living. Consumption of too much alcohol was first a sin (drunkenness), then a crime (public intoxication), then an illness (alcoholism) and then a common way of life for many teens in our culture.

Remember that God holds people responsible (including teens) for their actions even if those actions are not illegal or socially unacceptable. Killing Jews (6,000,000 of them) was legal and socially acceptable in Nazi Germany, but that did not make it morally correct. Buying and selling Africans and African-Americans as slaves was legal and socially acceptable in the USA 200 years ago, but that did not make it morally correct.

God holds people, including teenagers (adolescents), responsible for their actions even if their culture does not. You are responsible to keep his commandments, so it is wise to look into the Bible to see what God considers to be right and wrong. Even if you are not held legally responsible by your culture, you are by your God.

Finally, part of the invention of juvenile delinquency was the creation of crimes that can be committed only by adolescents. Nearly a quarter of a million people are arrested each year in the USA for breaking curfew, loitering violations, and running away from home—all of the people arrested for these offenses are under 18 years of age. Although these are illegal (and you should obey the law), they are not sinful. There is nothing immoral about being outside after midnight (or whatever time is specified in the law), so you do not have to ask God’s forgiveness.

## Chapter 17

### High School Invented/Required

In Chapter 2, we considered Daniel and his friends becoming TCKs and attending school in their host country. Like most TCKs today, Daniel and his friends had outstanding files in the office. They all came from good family backgrounds, and their physicians could find no defects to report on their physicals. Though people did not take photos in those days, these TCKs were all described as handsome. If SATs and ACTs had been available, these guys would have scored at the highest levels—probably above 700 on all the SAT scales and above 30 on all the ACT scales. Apparently their parents had done a good job of educating them in their passport country because they were knowledgeable, well-informed young men. They had high scores on their aptitude tests in all areas. In fact, they would be qualified for government service at the highest levels upon graduation.

Though we don't know exactly how old Daniel and his friends were, they were most likely teenagers, about high school age today. They took three years of courses, including full-time summer school every year, to graduate. That time is equal to our usual four years of study taking summers off. It was a residential boarding school in his host country so Daniel lived in the dorm and ate in the cafeteria which served the finest food and drink available. That is not the case today, at least not if you listen to student comments about cafeteria food. The curriculum was to study the language and literature of the host country, sort of a liberal arts curriculum to learn the culture. After their three years

of education they had positions in government service waiting for them.

#### Bible Times

Although Daniel and his friends were in a boarding school being educated in government supported schools, this was because he was being prepared for government service in his host country. The norm for people in his passport country was to be educated at home, not educated by the state or the church. Look at what the Bible says in Deuteronomy 6 when talking about the commandments.

- Impress them on your children.
- Talk about them when you sit at home.
- Talk about them when you walk along the road.
- Talk about them when you lie down.
- Talk about them when you get up.
- Tie them as symbols on your hands.
- Bind them on your foreheads.
- Write them on the doorframes of your houses.
- Write them on your gates.

Today we would express this differently, but Scripture says that education is to take place in everything you do as a family from the time you get up to the time you go to bed. We would probably have information on memory cards in our pockets (rather than wearing them as philatories), and we would pin things on bulletin boards and hang them on our refrigerators with magnets. The point is that it is done by the parents in the home.

In addition, Deuteronomy 6 later tells parents how to go about teaching. When children ask, “What do these things mean and why should we do them?” they were not to answer, “Because I said so” or “Because God says so.” They were to review the history of their culture and emphasize that God had given the commandments for their own good, to bring prosperity and long life.

The *Talmud* emphasized education by the parents as well. “The father is bound in respect of his son, to circumcise, redeem, teach him Torah, take a wife for him and teach him a craft. Some say to teach him to swim too. Rabbi Judah said: He who does not teach his son a craft, teaches him brigandage, ‘Brigandage!’ Can you really think so! -- But it is as though he taught him brigandage” (Kiddushin 29A). It went on to say, “And ye shall teach your sons. And if his father did not teach him, he must teach himself, for it is written, and ye shall study (Kiddushin 29B).” Education was the responsibility of the parents, and if they failed, it was the responsibility of the children themselves.

For thousands of years parents accepted this responsibility. In the Roman culture, if the parents could not do it themselves, they found someone to do it “*in loco parentis*,” in the place of the parent. This concept continued for centuries, and early schools in the USA were seen as operating in the place of the parents.

### USA Years Ago

In Europe totalitarian nations began taking over the education of children after the Middle Ages. People in the USA thought that could never happen in a country that emphasized freedom. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century it was happening as shown by the following quote contrasting Massachusetts and Delaware. “The report of the Massachusetts Board of Education declares that the cardinal principle ... at the foundation of their education system is that all the children of the state shall be educated by the state ... This is not the principle of our school system ... our school is founded on the position that the people must educate their own children. (All the state can do is to help and encourage.) (First state education convention, Dover, Delaware, 1843)

By the beginning of the twentieth century parents sued to try to keep educating their children at home, but they lost repeatedly.

- A parent, therefore is not at liberty to exercise a choice in that regard, but, where not exempt for some lawful reason, must send his child to the school where instruction is provided suitable to its attainments as the school authorities may determine (Miller v state, Indiana).
- To permit such parents to withdraw their children from the public schools without permission from the superintendent of schools, and to instruct them at home, would be to disrupt our common school system and destroy its value to the state (State v. Conourt, Washington).
- The welfare of the child, and the best interests of society require that the state shall exert its sovereign authority to secure the child the opportunity to acquire an education (State v. Bailey, Indiana).

By 1920 all but one of the states had laws requiring teenagers to attend school, and very few parents were able to educate their children at home. When they tried it, their children were considered truant, and the parents could have legal action taken against them. The first compulsory attendance law at the middle of the nineteenth century in Massachusetts required students to attend school six weeks each year until they were 14 years old. Thus it did not create adolescence. However, by the middle of the twentieth century most teens had to attend school until they were at least 16, if not 17 or 18, years of age unless their parents signed for them to quit at an earlier age.

Even this would not have created adolescence if age-grading had not been invented. Until the last couple centuries people just remained in a grade until they could do the work required in that grade, regardless of their age. For example, in Chalons, France, 1618-1620, students in the lowest grade were 8-18 years of age, students in the next higher grade were 8-21 years of age, and so forth. They were placed in grades on the basis of their knowledge, not how old they were. However, promotion on the basis of age became law, so that it was very difficult, if not impossible, for people to graduate from school before they were 17

or 18 years old. Thus, education change was a part of the invention of adolescence.

Of course, part of the reason for compulsory attendance was that western culture had passed laws forbidding people to work and marry, and nothing had been provided for the adolescents to do. They could not work, so one answer was to create something for them to do, and education sounded like a good solution to the problem of teenagers with nothing to do. It is little wonder that many teenagers do not enjoy school and are not motivated to study.

During the early part of the twentieth century, teenagers found themselves more and more likely to be enrolled in school. Records show how many teenagers 14-17 years of age were enrolled during the first one-third of the century.

- 1900: 1 in every 10 enrolled in school (11%)
- 1910: 1 in every 7 enrolled in school (15%)
- 1920: 1 in every 3 enrolled in school (32%)
- 1930: 1 in every 2 enrolled in school (51%)

As you can see, the majority of teenagers attending high school is an invention of the last century.

### USA Today

During the last half of the twentieth century education trends reversed. Parents were increasingly allowed to educate their children at home or send them to private schools. By the beginning of the twenty-first century more than 850,000 children were attending school at home and another 11,300,000 were attending private schools. Parents were again taking the responsibility for educating their children. About one child in every six was either being schooled at home or in a private school which served as educating “in loco parentis.”

### What can adolescent TCKs do?

Such statistics probably come as no surprise to most TCKs. In fact, most TCKs are either homeschooled or attend a private school of some kind. Although some attend the national schools in their host country and the public schools in their passport country, they are a small minority. However, the main point of this chapter is that TCKs, like other adolescents, attend school until they are about 18 years old. TCKs before adolescence was invented simply went to work and married soon after they reached puberty. Given that you have to go to school of some kind, what should you do? Here are some suggestions.

- Make the most of your time in school. Pay attention, study, and so forth. Just putting in the required time makes little sense when you can be gaining something during that time.
- Read on your own. After you have completed your homework, don't just goof off, but learn all you can about things which interest you. This may be anything from photography to insects to...
- Learn how to discipline yourself to study, to get work done and do it well.
- If you do not like the “academic” part of school, take some vocational-technical courses.
- Get some “practical” training by “apprenticing” yourself to someone who does what you are interested in.
- Find a teacher as a “mentor.” Meet with him or her to learn about things which really interest both of you.
- Complete your education, your diploma or degree. We live in a “credentials oriented” society, and the piece of paper saying you have completed all requirements is very important when it comes to getting hired.
- If you dropped out of high school, earn a GED or some other certificate showing that you can complete a project.
- Take college courses. If you do not live near a college, many courses are available online from colleges and universities around the world.



- Remember that a good attitude in school means good recommendations from your teachers, and you will need those recommendations in the future.
- If you are tempted to drop out of school, talk with half a dozen people who dropped out ten or more years ago.
- Get a part time job or do some work/study. Learn all you can at work.
- Become a faculty assistant in an area that interests you.
- Get involved in co-curricular activities that interest you whether it is a club in a particular academic area, in music, or in athletics.
- Graduate early and get on with your life if you really do not like school.
- Use your time to prepare for the future.

## Conclusion

By now you probably understand yourself better than when you started the book. The term “Third Culture Kid” implies that the person becomes that because of cultural factors. However, the term “adolescent” does not if you are from a culture where adolescence has been a part of the culture for a century or more. Just knowing that both of these are cultural creations makes many adolescent TCKs more comfortable with who they are.

You may feel that it is not fair to be an adult but not be treated as one. You are right. You may feel that it is not fair to be sexually mature but not allowed to marry and express that sexual maturity in the marriage relationship. You are right. You may feel that it is not fair to be physically and cognitively mature but not allowed to work and be a full member of society. You are right. Few people would say that this is fair or logically sensible, but adolescence has been a part of our culture for so long that no one can remember what it was like for thousands of years before that, and few people question it.

Someday the culture may change back to more logical “stages” of development, but it will not be in your lifetime. It took more than a century for the concept to develop in our culture, and it will likely take even longer to remove it. Since you have been “handed” this concept in your life, the best you can do is to adapt to it as well as you and your parents can. Then when you have children do whatever you can to make their adolescence as easy as possible.

One further thing to consider is that at the same time that our culture was inventing adolescence, it was inventing retirement. That was fully introduced into USA culture with the passage of the Social Security Act in the mid 1930s. We have now reached the

point at which those who began working under the Social Security program have retired, and the system has matured. At this point the program appears to be in financial difficulty, and only time will tell whether or not people between 18 and 65 years of age can produce enough income for everyone under the age of 18 and over the age of 65 not to have to work.

In the past no culture has been able to do that, so people began working when they matured in their early teens and continued working until they were physically unable to do so any more. We are all part of a massive social/cultural experiment to see if we can produce enough to have both adolescence and retirement. You will likely learn if our culture can do that in your lifetime. I wish you the best.

## About the Author

TCK cousins were a part of Ron's family from the time he was born. Uncle George, Aunt Peg, and their five MK's came back to the states from Burundi in the heart of Africa every five years. In those days people called these cross-cultural worker kids MKs, and it was obvious that they were influenced by two cultures. As Ron himself lived through adolescence, he just assumed that it was a universal stage of development.

It was only after he had married, become a college professor, and had children who were becoming adolescents that Ron realized that adolescence was a cultural invention experienced by a minority of people in the world. During this time in the 1980s he wrote a book, *Understanding Adolescence*, to make parents aware of this cultural invention.

Then in the 1990s as he was looking toward retirement and focusing on cross-cultural worker care he realized that his MK cousins were not only influenced by two cultures but also were part of a third culture as well—they were TCKs. TCKs on campus became a part of his life as he and his wife (Bonnie) wrote them, greeted them, attended their activities on campus, and invited them to Sunday dinners every couple weeks.

Now retired from teaching, he and Bonnie see TCKs and their parents all over the world. More information about them and their ministry is available at [www.crossculturalworkers.com](http://www.crossculturalworkers.com).