

A Youth Survey: Is Church the Answer?

– Part 1 –

(by Teresa D. Goins)

Young people today are under more pressure than ever before. They are influenced by reality *YouTube* celebrities; inundated with frightening news stories of neighborhood and school shootings; tempted to conform to popular unprincipled values; all the while, overcome with the incredulous burden of how they fit in this world. Is the church the answer? This is the first of a three-part article that will share the results of a simple-yet-significant survey (albeit amateur) recently conducted at our church, with the help of a few members of our youth group. Twelve young people were interviewed with one two-fold question: ***What are the most troubling of issues for a young person today; and how does your involvement in church help you cope?*** There were varying answers (more than one from most interviewees), but a noteworthy conclusion could be derived from their responses.

To better understand our survey results, we will first look at the demographics of the 12 persons interviewed. These data are somewhat cumbersome but will convey who our young interviewees were and possibly why their responses were as such. Exactly half of the group was African-American; the other half, white. Four were male, eight, female; and all interviewees were between the ages of nine and 16. Six of them were from Frankfort, Kentucky, a city that is 20% less densely populated than Louisville, the home of the other six. Further statistics for each city (e.g., the percentages of four-year college graduate residents and single-parent family homes) are otherwise similarly comparable. However, the yearly family median income of Louisville residents is approximately \$4,000 higher than that of Frankfort. Lastly, one of the weightiest of disparities is the presence of violent crime, which rates Louisville at 46.2 and Frankfort at only 24.4 (22.7 for entire U.S.) – crime having been ranked on a scale of 1 for ‘low-’ to 100 for ‘high-crime.’ (These 2019 statistics denote *Sperling’s BestPlaces** data, which are sourced from, among other population authorities, the U.S. Census Bureau.)

Now, let’s communicate the young people’s responses. For the first part of the question – What are the most troubling of issues for a young person today? – there were 25 answers from the 12 interviewees. It would appear that the biggest worry on the minds of our youth could be categorized as **the demanding nature of school** (scoring 44% of total answers). The next most distressing problem, according to our survey, was **bullying** (24% of answers). **Fear of violence** ranked third, at 12%; and **drugs and alcohol**, fourth, at 8%. The remaining outlier responses (each representing 4% of total or 1 response each) were **family money concerns**, **peer pressure**, and **suicide**.

The results of this survey may shock you. The number one concern – the overwhelming demands of school – might prompt some readers to wonder if our young people are lazy or don’t care to put forth the effort it takes to succeed; but the truth is quite the contrary. Here are some of the

ways our youth articulated this concern: “I am stressed by my challenging school schedule;” “I want to do well but sometimes, it seems my teachers care more about grades than about learning;” and “I struggle with a real fear of failure and disappointing my family.”

One interesting response regarding bullying (the second most troubling issue) was, “All bullies should get the same punishment, no matter who they are.” Thirdly (regarding violence and substance abuse), one younger interviewee said she worries often about “drugs that can cause murder, stealing, and fighting.” However, the most disturbing response came from a teenage interviewee who shared that he (already, at his young age) knew personally three kids that had killed themselves.

From the data collected for the first part of our two-fold question, we can gather two significant conclusions: (1) Youth today care about education and truly want to succeed; and (2) they are oftentimes stressed, anxious, and even frightened by the world around them. Most parents and teachers have no problem disciplining young people, but what do we do to encourage them toward success or comfort them when they are afraid? **This is where the church can make a monumental difference.**

As aforementioned, this penning represents only *Part 1* of our survey results. Stay tuned next month for *Part 2*, which will reveal the responses to the second half of our survey question: As a young person, how does your involvement in church help you cope? You will be thoroughly blessed by the interviewees’ candid responses!

* DATA SOURCE: https://www.bestplaces.net/compare-cities/louisville_ky/frankfort_ky/people

NOTE: As with any other careful survey, detailed demographics of individual interviewees, per each response, are kept confidential.

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