

Almost Christian Book Study

Begin by understanding the context the book is written in. The National Study of Youth and Religion that ran from 2003 – 2005, with the purpose being to study adolescent spirituality in the United States. The results of this study showed that Christianity in the U.S. is becoming a watered down version of our Biblical witness. And that is the faith that is being passed on to our children. Creasy Dean proposes that by tending to the faith of our youth we will reclaim our own.

Part I Benign Faith

1. Read Paul's testimony to King Agrippa in Acts 26. Can you tell the story of your faith in a similar way? Begin by writing about it or telling someone about it.
2. In looking at the guiding beliefs of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism on page 14, what is missing from these beliefs? Can you articulate counter beliefs?
3. Reflect on the statement at the end of the second paragraph on pg 15. "the church's job is to till the soil, prepare the heart, ready the mind, still the soul, and stay awake so we notice where God is on the move, and follow."
4. Review the "Project Contours" pg 16-21. Do we hear that "we get what we are?"; that these points are mirrors of our own faith lives?
5. On page 42 you find the author's thesis statement: "Their (highly devoted teenagers) identities were grounded in an articulated "God-story" that, along with the support of their faith communities, filled their lives with purpose and hope. These four theological accents – a creed to believe, a community to belong to, a call to live out, and a hope to hold onto – were pronounced in the faith of these teenagers. What are our strengths and weaknesses in these four areas?"

Part II Claiming a God Story

1. Page 48, "cultural toolkit" is defined as "symbols, stories, rituals, relationships, and world views that we pick up from our experience of the world around us – our default operating system..." and is further illuminated in Table 3.1. What are our church's cultural tools that we are passing on to our children? Mission? Prayer? Conflict resolution? Leadership?
2. On page 60, in the final paragraph, How is God using our church's tools to enter the world?

3. Pg 73, “Characteristics of the Authoritative Community” what are our top 3 strengths and where are our challenges?
4. On pg 80, the study made some conclusions about characteristics of mature Christian young people. How do these relate as goals for any strong youth program? Can they be adapted as goals for our youth program?
5. Creasy-Dean becomes fairly adamant about God’s mission and the mission of the church. See the second paragraph p101, “To participate in God’s own sending of Jesus Christ, youth ministry must...” Have we lost sight of the mission of the church? Do we bless and send?, accept and challenge?

Part III Consequential Faith

1. We find that family matters most when it comes to translating our faith. Are we teaching families how to do this? Are we allowing people to articulate their faith in different ways? (written devotions, testimonies, faith talk at home?)
2. Look at the guidelines for translating faith on page 123, and characteristics of a participatory culture, how do they allow for holy eavesdropping with our youth? Are our walls so high as to not allow them to see us struggle with issues of faith? Are we connected with our community enough to allow them to see our struggle with ways to serve our community?
3. Do we encourage a conversational faith? Simply asking “where did you see God today?” or “Where or how was God especially present for you today?” can be questions that lead to a deeper faith understanding.
4. Table 8.1 on page 169, anxiety vs love...where are our traits? And where do first steps toward transformation lie?
5. In conclusion, Creasy-Dean comes to “Make no small plans” and on page 191 in the second paragraph, “Young people looking to us for meaning and hope do not need us to protect God...they need us to model a theology marked by patience, determination, and above all, humility as postmodern Christians honestly confront...research that may challenge who we thought we were.” Are you ready to confront who we have become?
6. Among her greatest conclusions on pg 193-5 is, “What Have We Learned?” Take in that entire section, 1 – 5; and can you determine 5 things you can do this month to begin to change how our youth are learning the faith from us – the adults in their life?