

CHALLENGES FACED BY TEENAGERS IN THE 21st CENTURY

With

Reference to three local churches in Gauteng

By

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Betty my wife and companion in raising four teenagers, for her support and encouragement throughout this research work, and to our last son Teboho, who always bring joy to us as a teenager.

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ABSTRACT

It is a fact, as parents raise the teens that they will experience the normal feelings of confusion, frustration, and misunderstanding at various times of their lives. This has been confirmed by notable authors that much of the confusion, frustration, and misunderstanding between adults and their teens exists as a normal part of living with a child that is growing up. Gaining knowledge by parents, youth pastors, church leaders, and all youth practitioners in regard to the challenges facing teenagers in the 21st century will help overcome many of the concerns, and also help close the cultural-generational gap that exist.

Empirical studies was done by a questionnaire instrument. The churches that participated in this project are: Crystal Tabernacle church Eldorado Park, Koinonia Bible church Sebokeng and Grace Bible church also at Sebokeng. 120 respondents were interviewed. The results did not falsify or verify the hypothesis reflected in this thesis. However, the results verified the challenges the youth is facing in the 21st century era.

The study recommend to the youth leaders and youth practitioners in general, to subscribe to the theological and teleological aspects of the youth ministry as reflected in this study. Youth ministry should be viewed and understood as part of a comprehensive, inclusive and differentiated ministry of the congregation, with catechesis as a vital component.

OPSOMING

Dat ouers tydens die opvoeding van tieners die normale verwarring, frustrasie en misverstande sal ervaar, is 'n feit. Skrywers bevestig dat verwarring, frustrasie en misverstande tussen volwassenes en tieners deel van die normale lewe 'n groeiende kind is. Kennisname deur ouers, jeug predikers, kerkleiers en jeugwerkers van die uitdagings vir die adolessente van die 21st eeu, mag 'n bydrae lewer om die vooroordele, wat as gevolg van generasie gapings bestaan, teen te werk.

Empiriese navraag is deur middel van vraelyste gedoen. Die gemeentes wat aan hierdie navraag deelgenem het, is: Crystal Tabernacle Gemeente Eldorado Park, Koinonia Bible Gemeente Sebokeng en Grace Bible Gemeente ook in Sebokeng. Na aanleiding van 120 onderhoude wat gevoer is, is verskeie elemente van die gestelde hipotese bevestig of as vals bewys. Die uitkomst bevestig egter die uitdagings waarvoor die jeug van die 21st staan.

Die studie beveel aan dat teologiese en teleologiese perspektiewe die jeugbediening van jeugwerkers en jeugleiers moet onderlê. Jeugbediening moet is 'n geïntegreerde deel van die bediening in die gemeente waarvan kategetiese 'n belangrike onder afdeling vorm.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In most families, an estrangement occurs between parents and teenagers at some stage. It is as if the two groups attached value to and believe in different things, and each regards the other as being in the wrong. Mueller (1994:16) succinctly states that if raising teenagers could be reduced to a mathematical equation, many parents would write it like this:

Raising

Raising teenagers = confusion + frustration + misunderstanding

Mueller (1994:16) suggests that adolescence is a temporary mental illness and to be normal during the adolescence period is by itself abnormal.

It is a fact that, as parents raise the teens they love so much and cherish, they will experience the normal feelings of confusion, frustration and misunderstanding at various times of their lives. However, the fact that these feelings must be expected does not rule out the importance of dealing with and addressing them. Parents, youth ministry practitioners and all those who work with teenagers must ask questions like: How do people gain entrance to the world of the teenagers? How do people get in touch with them? What is their world like? What makes them tick? Why do they think and act the way they do? (Mueller 1994:16).

The researcher has observed and the literature has confirmed that teenagers and adults are at two entirely different places in the life cycle. Kitching et al. (1997:4) state that much of the confusion, frustration and misunderstanding exists as a normal part of living with a child who is growing. Gaining knowledge and insight into the challenges facing teenagers in the 21st century, which will be outlined in this paper, will help overcome many of the concerns and close the cultural-generational gap that exists (Mueller 1994:16). Through the chapters of this research, a new paradigm will emerge for teenagers in the next millennium.

1.2 Delimitations of the Study

Initially this study was to have focused on 200 teenagers of Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park and 300 teenagers of Grace Bible Church in Soweto. However, owing to problems encountered during the research process, as explained in section 3.9.4, the latter was replaced by Grace Bible Church in Sebokeng and an additional church, Koinonia Bible Church in Sebokeng was included. No attempt was made to study other churches in the area, as there are myriads of them. However, the researcher believes that the results from interviews and questionnaires may strike a responsive chord in youth leaders all over the world, and in those who are interested in teenagers and youth ministry in general.

The age group was limited from 14 to 18 years old. Generally these are the years where parents and youth leaders are saying: “would someone please help me understand my teenager” (Mueller 1994:16).

1.3 The Purpose of this Study

Firstly, the purpose of this study is to analyse and identify the challenges that teenagers of the 21st century are facing. For empirical research purposes, the researcher focused on Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park and Grace Bible Church in Soweto. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted to obtain the results.

Secondly, the researcher believes that this research work will serve as a guideline and an invaluable resource to other researchers, youth practitioners, children’s ministries, teenagers themselves and to community youth leaders at large. It is assumed that as this study progressed, a new paradigm emerged in youth ministry for the next millennium.

Thirdly, this study will help youth (children, teenagers and young adults) to become what they were created and called to be: people who are once again involved in the acts of God, in the service of the communication of the gospel and the kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come in the world (Nel 2000:4).

1.4 The Type of Research

This is a descriptive type of research. Descriptive research means to focus on the systematic description of a topic on the basis of empirical data. The researcher attempts to chart the challenges teenagers are facing in the 21st century in Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park and Grace Bible Church in Soweto, respectively, on the basis of theological motives and social characteristics. The research includes the gathering of statistical data in order to describe the teenagers under discussion.

1.5 The Relevance of this Research

Considering the alarming divorce rate, increasing number of dysfunctional families, teenage suicides, the widespread AIDS pandemic, poverty and unemployment in our communities, a study of this nature is long overdue as many people are dying because they lack knowledge. People who are leading youth and teenagers need to be aware of the challenges facing the youth they are leading, and be better equipped to help them.

1.6 The Problem Statement

According to DeVries (1994:25-26), most young people who disaffiliate with church do so by the time they have turned 16 years old. Research confirms that those youth who drop out of the church do so not when they leave for tertiary education institutions, as is often assumed, but while they are still in high school.

The crisis in youth ministry continues in spite of the exponential growth in the amount of money being spent on youth ministry and the number of professionals employed to do this work.

Mueller (1994:39) has observed teenagers over several years and asked them lots of questions. He asserts that he has no doubt that the teens of today are facing a whole new set of choices, expectations, fears, pressures and challenges.

According to these statements, there is an assumption that there are challenges that teens are facing in the new millennium.

What are the challenges that the teens of Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park and Grace Bible Church in Soweto are facing in the new millennium?

1.7 The Hypotheses

There are serious challenges facing the youth ministry in the 21st century. These challenges are hypothesised as follows:

- a) Teenagers lose interest in church attendance.
- b) There is an increase in sexual activity amongst the young people.
- c) There is an increase in violent activities among the youth in the church.
- d) There is an increase in the consumption of addictive substances among the youth.

1.8 Definition of Concepts and Assumptions

Since the main topic focuses on teenagers and the challenges they are facing in the 21st century, some initial light needs to be shed on the use of these concepts in the context of the present study.

1.8.1 Operational Definition of Adolescence

Nel (2000:30) states that the most important development towards a distinctive and definable youth subculture was the coming of *adolescence*. Up until the end of the 19th century, a person between 12 and 14 years was already regarded as an adult in many cultures and particularly in the Jewish culture. For example, boys at age 13 (plus one day) and girls at 12 (plus one day) observed the rite of *bar mitzvah* and *bar misvah*, respectively.

The concept of adolescence is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which refers to the one who grows. Today, the term “adolescence” refers to the time between puberty and adulthood. Kohen-Raz (1988:120) suggests that adolescence is not a static concept. He maintains that in adolescent research, the boundaries of adolescence, as in life, are fluid, difficult to delineate and ill-

defined. If, as in this case, it is not practically possible to use measurable physiological criteria for the delineation of adolescence, “next best” markers are ages of eligibility to enter institutions or ages of legal responsibility.

It should therefore be noted that the adolescents referred to in this study are the group of young people commonly referred to as teenagers, specifically from the ages of 14 to 18 years. In other words, these are young people starting secondary school up to but excluding those legally coming of age (21 years according to South African legislature).

1.8.2 Operational Definition of Challenges

Some challenges that are faced by teenagers in the 21st century are suicide, drug abuse, unwanted pregnancies, poor academic performance, familial conflict and juvenile crime. This list is by no means exhaustive.

The purpose of this study is not primarily to investigate the unique nature and process of challenges per se, but rather the content (type) and relative seriousness of challenges adolescents are facing like societal issues, family relationships, church relationships and their socio-political environment.

1.9 The Researcher’s Understanding of Practical Theology

It should be noted that the term “practical theology” is open to misunderstanding. Through the years the word “practical” has given rise to incorrect expectations on the part of many. This happens when “practical” is seen as the opposite of “theoretical”, since theory is the opposite of practice. However, this branch of theology is not just practical, in the sense that it deals only with actual practice; rather, just like other subdisciplines, it also attempts to share in the development of theological theory in general (Heitink 1999:19). Therefore, it compels us to live with this problem, since the term has been accepted, nationally and internationally, by theologians and academics.

1.9.1 Definition of Practical Theology

Heitink (1999:6) briefly defines practical theology as a theory of action and states that “it is the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society”.

Heitink (1999:8) names the mediation of the Christian faith Praxis 1, and the praxis of modern society Praxis 2. Notably, Praxis 1 shows that the object of practical theology is situated in the intentional, more specifically, intermediary or meditative actions, with the purpose of bringing in an agogical way or change in a specific situation.

Heitink (1999:8) states that Praxis 2 relates in particular to the context in which the action takes place and aims to bring about the needed change.

1.9.2 The Origins of Practical Theology

Nel (1999:24) explains that up to Martin Luther’s time (and even beyond), the emphasis was mainly on the pastoral functions of the church, hence the designation “pastoral theology”. He further states that the term “*theologica practica*” was used for the first time in the twelfth century ‘Barnard n.d.:5’”. The content of this theology was determined to a large extent by the requirements set for the spiritual office bearers of the church. The pastoral letters of Paul were considered to be the point of orientation in this approach.

Luther objected to the view that practical theology was an alternative to theoretical theology. Rather, he emphasised the fact that true theology was practical in nature (Nel 1999:24). It is interesting that his view gained momentum until the 18th century. However, in as much as practical theology is important, it is still not a discipline within its own right. As Nel (1999:24) points out, it is often regarded as a way to teach students how to apply what they have learned in other theological disciplines.

The well known Schleiermacher, also known as the father of practical theology, played a vital role in the development of this theology. He chose his point of

departure in Christian faith, which he viewed as a praxis that develops in the course of history and demands a critical-scientific reflection (Heitink 1999:25). Subsequently, this reflection has spread, as a result of unavoidable differentiation, to a number of the following subdisciplines: philosophical, historical and practical theology. Nel (1999:25) declares that Schleiermacher regarded the latter as the “doctrine of the art” (*Kunstlehre*) of the church practice.

According to Heitink (1999:33), Schleiermacher’s proposal for practical theology leads toward a view of the church that regards the individual as the only important component. His conception of this discipline can be formulated as “practical theology as guidance for human souls”. Important themes such as meaning in life, religious experience and spiritual health have kept their relevance until today.

This sketch of the development of practical theology suggests that it can be understood as a process of adaptation to a cultural process of subjectivising. This does not, however, take away from the responsibility of practical theology to relate to this process in a theological-critical way, as it formulates its theories.

1.9.3 Practical Theology – Theory of Action

Heitink (1999:148-149) explains the concept of *integrative* practical theology by clarifying how hermeneutical, empirical and critical perspectives interact. For example, the critical perspective has to do with history. Human knowledge and action occur in space and time: who does what to whom in what situation? In that sense, all a person’s actions and knowledge are in principle open to critical examination.

Heitink (1999:45) says that it is in the empirical approach that the social sciences prove their usefulness, for they make it possible to speak about the church in a new way, “not in theological images of the ideal, but in descriptive and explanatory languages ...”. What is important is that both social science’s theory and methodology help us to understand better what is happening “on the ground” (the empirical approach), to reflect on this in the light of the Christian tradition

(the hermeneutical approach), and to look at ways of effecting change/improvement (the strategic approach).

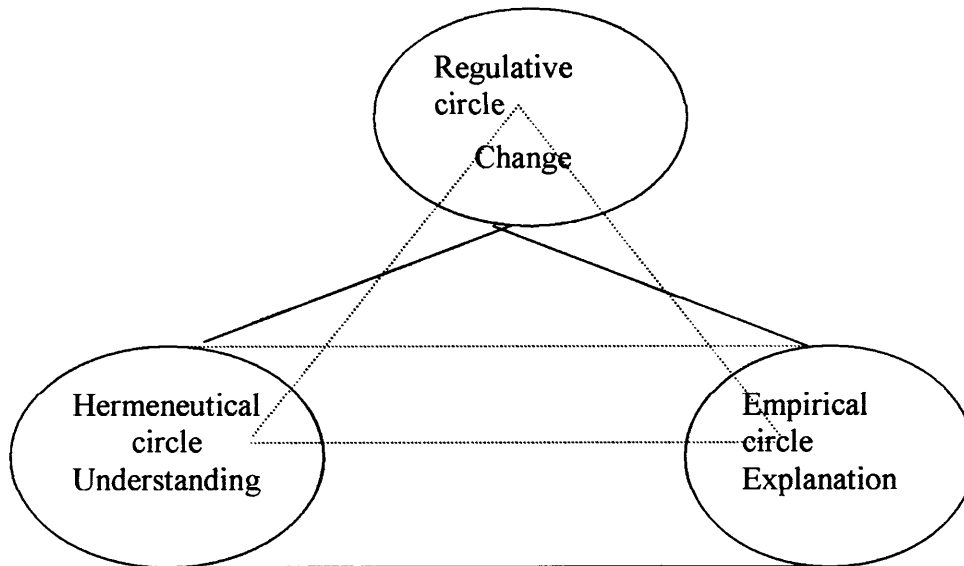


Figure 1.1 The methodology of practical theology (Adapted from Heitink 1999:165)

The figure above shows three circles: the hermeneutical circle, as the interpretation theory that is typical for the human sciences; the empirical circle, as the testing circle that is typical for the natural sciences; and the regulative circle, which is typical for the methodology in practical thinking. Three concepts are the focus here: Understanding, explaining and changing. Understanding and explaining constitute the two focal points of the hermeneutic circle. Here it also has to be remembered that interpretation is a circular process.

The three circles also correspond to the distinctive goals of the discipline: The hermeneutical perspective refers to the interpretation of human action in the light of the Christian tradition, the empirical perspective refers to the analysis of human action with regard to its factuality and potentiality, and the third circle refers to the development of action models and action strategies for the various domains which include humanity and religion, church and faith, and religion and society (Heitink 1999:165, 242).

1.9.4 Practical Theology: Theory and Praxis

Practical theology also recognises the interaction between theory and praxis (Heitink 1999:151). For example:

Praxis – is the actions of individuals and groups who are inspired by the Christian tradition and who focus on salvation.

Theory – is a more comprehensive, hermeneutical-theological statement that relates the Christian tradition to experience.

Heitink further explains the relation between theory and praxis by using a few theses of the German practical theologian, Greimacher, which are briefly summarised below:

- There is no pure theory of praxis. Even the best listener of the Word is a child of the times.
- Though at times we are unaware of it, praxis always has an underlying theory. Even the “simple faith” that prefers to accept things without explanation is a form of theory.
- The primacy of theory over praxis, long defended by practical theology, must be rejected, e.g. dogma without doxology becomes mere clinical doctrine.
- In the same manner, the primacy of praxis over theory must be rejected. For example, people are not as they are and things do not always happen according to fixed laws.
- The relation between theological theory and ecclesiastical praxis is not determined by a complete separation nor by an identification of the two, but by a bipolar tension-filled combination.

Theory is in constant need of verification through praxis, while praxis must constantly be transcended by theory (Heitink 1999:151-153).

The researcher has realised that the current Praxis 1 concerning youth ministry and the challenges faced by teenagers in the 21st century (Heitink’s Praxis 2) is

overwhelming indeed. This unequivocally lodges an urgent request for new practice theories. Simply put, youth ministry and their practitioners need to make provision to accommodate special related needs which will be suggested at the end of this thesis. They also need to design a practice theory which is contextually determined as well as contextual in nature.

1.10 Chapter Outline

Chapter One concerns itself with the introduction of the study under discussion. The purpose of the study and what the researcher wants to achieve with it is set out.

Chapter Two focuses on the literature review. Important aspects of this thesis, namely the theological aspect of youth ministry, adolescence developmental theory and the challenges teenagers are facing, are addressed.

Chapter Three focuses on the research design and methodology. The methodology used is as follows: data collection, questionnaire development, pilot study, fieldwork, sampling and data analysis of the respondents under investigation.

Chapter Four sets out the empirical research results and findings. The researcher chronicled the findings from the questionnaires that were distributed, and from interviews that were held at the two churches under discussion.

Chapter Five focuses on recommendations and conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

YOUTH MINISTRY AND ADOLESCENCE

2.1 Introduction

Those in our culture who study children and teens are concerned by the rising casualty rate. In 1990 Mueller (1994:38) stated that the National Association of States Boards of Education joined with the American Medical Association to call attention to the declining condition of children and teens in America and issued the following statement:

For the first time in the history of this country, young people are less healthy and less prepared to take their places in society than were their parents. And this is happening at a time when our society is more complex, more challenging, and more competitive than ever before.

Mueller (1994:39) has observed teenagers and asked them lots of questions. He maintains that modern children are without doubt facing a whole new set of choices, expectations, fears, pressures, challenges and problems, and they are facing them at younger and younger ages.

Nel (2003:151) also confirms that the many different contexts in and with which adolescents have to cope make the development of a coherent self complex almost impossible, and even highly unlikely.

This chapter presents the theological aspect of youth ministry, theories of child development and a discussion of the adolescent subculture. Tremendous challenges that the youth are facing in the 21st century will be discussed extensively.

2.2 The Theological Aspect of Youth Ministry

One of the greatest defects and a missing ingredient of youth ministry is a sound theological foundation (Nel 2000:8). Nel (2000:8) is of the opinion that traditionally

youth ministry and catechesis were sharply differentiated and often separated. He further argues that:

[H]istorically speaking, the church and organized youth work were typically autonomous, and often still are – probably because youth ministry did not really exist before the Industrial Revolution of the mid-19th century. In the rural context of the world, up to and during the Industrial Revolution, children and young people were perceived as part of the family. Yet studies of catechesis have been done since the time of the new Testament and probably were the sum total of church involvement with youth for many centuries. Catechesis has been viewed as part of the church’s task without any reference to the rest of what we know as youth ministry.

The revolution that put youth ministry on the agenda was no flash in the pan. It actually drew the attention of individuals and the church, in particular, to youth inside – but especially outside – their parental homes. Some societies in South Africa are experiencing something of the industrial and youth revolutions that occurred in other countries in the middle of the 19th and 20th centuries. Indeed, churches, including all youth ministry practitioners, are challenged to notice the youth, to study them and to sense their needs in order to serve them effectively. The youth ministry must be theologically founded (Nel 2000:9).

Nel (2003:154-156) summarises the crucial theological issues in youth ministry that need to be challenged as follows:

- “Do we really understand the corporate nature of creation and recreation? However much God cares for individuals, He does so in and as a part of the *Corpus Christi*. Paul’s understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit is one of the best examples: I share in the Spirit in and as much as I share in the body – whose Spirit it is... Churches then are no less individualistic in nature and approach than any other expression of the local culture.
- Do we really understand that forms of being together, like small groups, do not bring back the real theological issues of *Koinonia*, belonging, caring for and loving in spite of?... You have a *koinonia* that not only challenges our individualism but

transforms it into growing koinonial individuals where giving is as much a part of being as receiving.

- Do we really understand the serious nature of working with, restoring as much and as best we can the basic community called family? The question is not whether there are one or two parents, good or bad ones, broken homes because of separation, broken homes in spite of the family still being together: the point is that we grow up being critically influenced by those family close to us. God knows that and He wants it to be like this.
- Do we really understand the necessity of modelling by other Christians in facilitating development in a critical time of searching for and finding identity? Every single human being becomes who God intended him or her to be by means of another human being.
- Do we understand the theological principle that it is in giving that we are growing? Do we understand that ‘love is nothing but self-giving service’? This is the only way of being a Christian: without it there is indeed no communication of who God is, no communication of the gospel, faith, no ministry and no church.”

According to Kitching and Robbins (1997:14), the failure of youth ministry in the mainline church has to be viewed, above all, as a crisis in theology. Inadequate models, poor educational strategies, inevitable historical cycles and institutional lack of support are some of the reasons for its failure. They further state that the absence of passion (the state of loving something enough to suffer for it) is another issue that needs to be addressed in youth ministry. The biblical foundation in youth ministry is essential, and this will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 The Bible and the Youth

Our theology informs everything we do. The problem often comes when we define our theology. At the bottom of this lie two issues: “how we use the Bible and what we have available to explore the basis of all theology, the Bible” (Nel 2003:153). Zuck and Benson (1978:36) also agree that there must be a biblical recognition that the

youth in relation to Christ, the family, the church and the world are to be viewed in the beautiful balance of Scripture.

Adopting this viewpoint implies that everything we do in youth ministry is informed by theology. The Bible is intriguingly beautiful and complex at the same time. Nel (2003:153) states that when one misses the ability to grasp the extent of exegetical tools, one eventually loses sight of the Bible. "...many people working with young people do not have, by training or by passion, a growing capability or serious desire to understand the Bible and to discern theology."

Youth should not be viewed as *partly* the congregation's responsibility as is the case in most congregations. Rather, it should be viewed as the *wholly* the congregation's responsibility.

Youth ministry is part of a comprehensive and inclusive ministry of the congregation. It includes more often than not the organised efforts of some organisations, institutions and congregations, in view of organising youth. The whole is the congregation, and of this whole, the youth and youth ministry are a vital, integral and important part (Nel 2000:77).

Nel (2000:78-79) provides a summary of the consequences in regard to the theological aspect of youth ministry as comprehensive and inclusive:

- The congregation should never think of the faith life and experiences of the children and adolescents as something separate from the faith life and experiences of adult members. People do not need to reach a certain age before God becomes interested in them and starts working with and through them. The youth are part of the congregation's service of God because they share in God's relationship with His people (the covenant) and are incorporated into the local church.
- The preceding point means that youth are not a separate group in the congregation. Even though they are unique and have a distinct character, they are not apart from the rest. The relationship of God with the believers and their children, as well as the nature of the local church as something created by God makes this impossible. Therefore, although the youth, because of their distinct

nature, require and should receive specific attention, they should still be approached and ministered to as an essential part of the local church. Where this sense of wholeness is lacking, the parts may degenerate into counterproductive youth programmes.

- Nowhere in the congregation can the youth be neglected or ignored. The local church does not consist only of the adults, just as it does not consist merely of youth. The youth have to be incorporated in the very line of thought and received into every part of the ministry. They have to be taken into account, regardless of the type of the ministry on the agenda.
- The youth are the local church's responsibility. Children and adolescents are not simply the charge of the few people who love and understand them and want to help them – however well these people might mean. They are the responsibility of the parents, the Sunday school teachers, the elders, the deacons, the membership as such, as well as the responsibility of one another as youth themselves. This responsibility is inalienable and untransferable.

It is rather disturbing that the comprehensive and inclusive approach to youth ministry is not taken seriously in many congregations. Nel (2000:79) remarks that one of the reasons is that in theological institutions, “youth ministry” is still taught as a kind of supplement to Christian education.

In the following chapter the researcher will briefly discuss the teleological challenges for youth ministry.

2.4 Teleological Challenges for Youth Ministry

The goal in youth ministry is closely related to its theological departure points (Nel 2000:63). God's goal is to build His congregation in a special way. In His wisdom He has made the necessary arrangements to empower the building of the congregation. In the final instance, the congregation builds itself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Nel 2000:63-64).

The youth have to be incorporated into the dynamic plan and the goal of God for His congregation and, through it, for the world. God's purpose for the congregation also applies to the youth, as they are an integral part of the congregation. Nel (2000:64) asserts that the purpose of youth ministry should be aligned with the purpose of God and with His congregation.

Nel (2000:66) is of the opinion that, in building up the local church, whatever happens to parents has to happen together with their children; what happens to older members has to happen together with their youth and vice versa. This "together with" cannot and will not always imply a physical "together with", yet the principle always applies. When this theory functions as a principle in deliberations and planning with them, the practical ministry with them becomes easier.

The goal for youth ministry, according to Nel (2000:66), is participation as part of building up the local church – in unity with the will and plan of God for every congregation in its context. This means that all the goals for growth in the local church include and concern the youth as an integral part of the body of believers.

It should be mentioned that salvation often was and is the main purpose in youth ministry. Nel (2003: 156-157) states that youth ministry is evangelistic in nature and approach. He further argues that salvation in Scripture is comprehensive in nature. It has to do with:

- Understanding reconciliation as "finished" by Christ;
- receiving and understanding forgiveness;
- becoming whole;
- getting life back and restored;
- restoring life on earth as a representative of God;
- living the reality of following Christ;
- being different and making a difference;
- getting involved in the concreteness of the kingdom come and coming.

From the above, the conclusion is that a person is saved to become a disciple of Christ. Nel (2003:157) maintains that people make decisions for Christ in the hope that they eventually will become disciples.

The teleological aspect of youth ministry cannot be isolated from understanding theories of child development, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 Theories of Child Development

A theory attempts to explain how bits of information gathered relate to each other. A theory also suggests a number of hypotheses and predictions. For example, one theory may suggest that interpersonal relationships are critical in the learning process, and this assumes that those who follow a programmed learning situation might not do well compared to those in a classroom. However, this can be tested, and the prediction either confirmed or proven wrong (Richards 1983:92). Pastors and youth practitioners need to know the following basic theories that dominate the contemporary understanding of children and teenagers alike in their development:

2.5.1 Psychoanalytic Theory

The historical roots of this theory are Freudian: his view was that human beings are raging seas of passions and aggression. He saw the goal of nurturing as socialisation of the child, by developing controls that would keep the adult from expressing native destructive impulses and channel passions into acceptable patterns of behaviour. Freud's concepts grew out of his work with those suffering from varying degrees of mental illness (Richards 1983:93).

The most significant name within the psychoanalytical tradition is Erikson. He modified Freud's dark view of human nature. Erikson viewed children as seekers, who eagerly explore and try to master their environment. Contrary to Freud's views, his emphasis was not on illness but on the health of human beings. He identified the stages through which a child must pass on the way to a healthy maturity (Richards 1983:33). Erikson focused attention on those relationships with significant others that enable or inhibit growth through the developmental stages.

While Erikson is best known for, and most interested in, his work with teenagers (adolescents) and their “identity crisis”, his notions about the other stages of childhood have stimulated much exploration and research, as seen in the following table:

Table 2.1: Erikson’s developmental theory

Age in years	Psychosocial crisis (state)	Significant person(s)
Birth – 1 year	Trust vs mistrust	Mother
1 – 3 years	Autonomy vs shame/doubt	Parents
3 – 6 years	Initiative vs guilt	Family
6 – 12 years	Industry vs inferiority	Neighbourhood, teacher, school
12 – 17 years	Identity vs role confusion	Peer groups, heroes
Young adulthood	Intimacy vs isolation	Friends, opposite sex
Adulthood	Generativity vs stagnation	Spouse, children
Old age	Ego integrity vs despair	Relationships with others

(Adapted from Richards 1983:94)

2.5.2 Cognitive Developmental Theory

The cognitive developmental theory was formulated by Jean Piaget, a European psychologist who studied children’s cognitive growth and abilities. He viewed people as active and adaptive. He insisted that a child was not shaped by parents or others through social interactions. Instead children, rather than mirroring experience, actively process all data and construct the explanations or understandings that then

guide their actions and responses. He further stated that personality and behaviour can best be understood in terms of the cognitions of children, through which they not only interpret experiences but also shape themselves (Richards 1983:99).

In addition to Freud and Erikson's excellent views about child development, Piaget's work involved definition of the sequence of cognitive growth and description of the cognitive processes of which children are capable at various ages, as shown in the following table:

Table 2.2: Piaget's structural stages

Age	Stage	Description of child's thinking
1½ - 4 years	Preconceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiative language, only partially understood • Objects seem stable, not able to grasp changing shapes due to perspective • Lacks abstracting ability to perceive space apart from perspective • Beginning to distinguish between past, present and future • Reasoning is by analogy to experiences
4 - 7 years	Intuitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and thought still tied to phenomenal experience: words represent child's own experiences and perceptions (a bottle is "where you put water") • Comprehends and can respond to complex adult language, but does not understand processes such as conservation (the transfer of a principle or characteristic across situations) • Objects now maintain identity despite changes in position perspective • Number sense develops with ability to measure quantity • Can compensate fully for perspective changes caused by change in position • Time sense is still personalised, and interactions between time, distance, speed, etc. not grasped • Great interest in explaining causes of what is observed, understanding of causes still highly intuitive

7 - 10 years	Concrete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can trace change in state through complex series rather than relying on impression of a particular observed state • Can take others' points of view and integrate their perspective with his/her own • Can begin to distinguish variables that cause change and mentally predict changes • Capacity to perceive objects, numbers, time, space (all 9 clouds move because the winds push)
10 - 15 years	Formal operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only now does the ability to think about thought – to explore relations between the real and the possible develop - “adult” kinds of thinking become possible

(Adapted from Richards 1983:100)

Children will think and respond in certain ways that are related to the richness of their environment. Whether they can think and respond in certain ways will be determined by the development of cognitive structures (Richards 1983:99-100).

2.5.3 Kohlberg's Theory

Kohlberg, who is known as having formulated the most influential development from structural theory, links moral thinking to Piaget's stage theory of development. According to Kohlberg, moral thought, like any other, is determined by the development of cognitive structures. His theory has stimulated considerable research and many attempts to define instructional processes that will encourage the development of moral thinking in children.

Kohlberg's approach tends to link somewhat with social learning theory in that he emphasises the influence of parents, peers, social models and all kinds of interpersonal interactions (Richards 1983:101). According to Kohlberg's theory, the manner in which the child perceives social experiences will be shaped by his/her cognitive structures, and there will be a fundamental synergy between social and intellectual development.

In the next section, the researcher will discuss the adolescent, subculture, and thereafter, adolescent concepts.

2.6 Adolescent Subculture

Davies in Ratcliff and Davies (1991:8) states that “empirical evidence generally confirms the existence, to some degree, of an adolescent subculture”. At the end of the century in which the time-span of and the term “adolescence” has been created and established, Nel (2000:28) states that there is no longer doubt as to whether there is really such a phenomenon as a youth subculture or not. He argues that the question is how it is to be defined and described.

Campolo (1989:35) defines youth subculture as “a system of values, beliefs, behaviour patterns, and language that enable teenagers to form differentiated sectors of our society”. It is argued that this subculture and other subcultures provide particular world views to all who are assimilated into their collective mindset.

Nel (2000:28) remarks further:

Many questions have not been fully answered. Probably the next century will also grapple with these questions. Not because youth subculture is vague, but because of its many facets, and because of its rapid and constant changes. It differs from place to place – from a residential area in which violence and power rule to a wealthy and stable suburb. From a subculture of criminals to youth groups in a strongly religious community. Cultures in the sense of distinctive ways of thinking and doing, distinctive creations, language and symbols among the youth, can in a sense only be described retrospectively.

The word “culture” refers to a blueprint for behaviour for an entire society, whereas the word “subculture” refers to a blueprint for behaviour for a smaller group within the society (Davies in Ratcliff & Davies 1991:8-9). It is notable that culture is all learned behaviour which is socially acquired, that is, the material and the non-material traits which are passed on from one generation to another. Material traits have to do with dressing, artefacts, art and food, etc. Non-material traits are to do with language, world views and values.

Campolo (1989:35-49) identifies two main subcultures of teenagers. One focuses on the here and now. To these teens there is no tomorrow, nor vocational plans. They have no idea what they might want to be a decade or two from now. They often find a religious link with the Pentecostal and Charismatic section of Christianity. The second group of teenagers is committed to a future that seems to be posited many years ahead. They talk not only of completing their tertiary education, but also of completing graduate studies, and getting married. Simply put, they are ready to make all kinds of sacrifices that will yield benefits in future.

2.7 Adolescence

The definition of the word “adolescence” was discussed in 1.8.1. However, it is important to further elaborate on the concept for the sake of clarification.

During the apostle Paul’s era, puberty was considered to be the beginning of adulthood, not the beginning of adolescence. Koteskey (1991:43) indicates that adolescence was the period between biological adulthood and social adulthood. Today, puberty means the age of sexual maturity, that is the age which people can have children, not the age at which we treat them as adults. Sebald (1984:7) argues that:

[A]dolescence terminates psychologically with the establishment of realistic and relatively consistent patterns of dealing with internal conflicts and the demands of the social and physical environment. It terminates socially when the socio-cultural environment yields sufficient consensus to declare the individual an adult.

Industrialisation, urbanisation, immigration and mobility all played a role in the creation of adolescence in earlier times. However, Koteskey (1991:48) argues that although the concerns were focused on humanitarian reasons, which was to “save children” for the labour market, many times the underlying motives were economic and selfish reasons.

Alexander (2004:37) remarks that psychologists tell us that a few generations ago adolescence identity and culture were non-existent. Change of vocations, education, early puberty and “later marriages” have created a definite adolescent stage and its presence is felt (and heard) by the distinctness of their culture. Koteskey (1991:42) agrees with Alexander by stating that the modern concept of adolescence is so new that our language does not even have words for male and female adolescents. For example, adults are called “men” and “women”. Children are called “girls” and “boys”. Neither of these fit teenagers who are often called “guys” and “gals” as slang for boys and girls.

Nel (2000:31-32) puts it as follows:

Part of youth subculture is the existence of an adolescent subculture. Every person between twelve and fourteen is expected to wait at least until the ages twenty-one to twenty-four before being allowed to enter adult society and sharing in the symbols that adult society attaches to maturity. The in-between-time, as one could call it – a time in which adult society, that has determined the terms for maturity, provides an education at, and subsequent to, school. As such adolescence is being enforced by law. With a body that is ready for the one and most important “symbol” of maturity, namely procreation (participating in the survival of humanity), the adolescent must wait for authorization by those that have already done waiting.

Indeed, adolescence is characterised by a number of things. Early psychologists and educators viewed it as a time of idealism and moral introspection, whereas the modern interpreters refer to it as a time of age-appropriate narcissism and moral relativism (Osmer 1996:9). These shifting definitions reflect the different institutional contexts giving shape to adolescence over the course of this century. The term “narcissism” in its simplest form refers to self-centredness. From a psychodynamic point of view, narcissism refers to behaviour such as megalomania, that is, self-centred involvement in objects even to the extent of dependence, the feelings of inferiority complex and the need to be admired, etc. (Bohleber in Nel 2000:34).

According to Nel (2000:35), the adolescent’s phase of life is characterised by a striking involvement with self, apparently an involvement which is normal. He

remarks that this involvement should be handled in a balanced way in their education. If there is no balance, it may give rise to pathological deviations of self-love that can destroy the adolescent.

In the 21st century, what is the shape of the adolescence stage in the life cycle? Osmer (1996:9) captures it in terms of two basic concepts: Individualisation and identity formation. The former describes adolescence sociologically, and the latter, psychologically. Nel (2000:35) points out that the two matters are linked, but what is especially important is the fact that the critical process of socialisation is not a takeover of the self. In this process, the individual himself/herself plays a decisive role. Osmer (1996:9-20) defines individualisation as the ways in which modern society gives more freedom to and places more burden on the individual. More burden has been placed on individuals to organise the various aspects of their lives. Identity formation, according to Erikson (in Osmer 1996:19), the construction “of a sense of sameness, a unity of personality now felt by the individual and recognized by others as having consistency in time”.

Adolescence is the stage in the life cycle during which young people construct, for the first time, a sense of self that binds together their past, present and future into a coherent whole. Simply put, they answer three fundamental questions: Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going? According to Osmer (2000:10), adolescence then must be investigated from two forgoing perspectives: as a social role mediating the individualising trends of modernity and as a psychological process in which personal identity is constructed.

Osmer (1996:11) argues that the transition from childhood to adulthood is acknowledged in virtually every tribal society. For example, special rites of passage exist to initiate pubescent girls and boys into adult society. However, in modern society, the clear-cut transition from childhood to adulthood has disappeared. Rather, it hinders individualisation without supplying the necessary support during the process. Entry into and exit from this role are not clearly demarcated. According to Osmer (1996:11-12), adolescents must carry out three tasks that will allow them to function as adults in a highly differentiated, loosely bounded society:

- “renegotiating their relationship with their family of origin, moving from a position of economic and psychological dependence to a relationship of relative independence;
- acquiring the repertoire of knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the wide range of institutional contexts characterizing modernity; and
- constructing a personal system of moral meaning in response to the challenges posed by cultural pluralism, generational discontinuity, and instrumental reason.”

Nel (2000:36) remarks that individualization is connected with all these fields. He asserts that it is all about finding and forming one’s own identity. It is about who I can be and want to be in these three relational fields.

Challenges that youth are facing will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

2.8 The Challenges

It is evident that today’s teenagers, and even more so in the “new” South Africa, inhabit a world of tremendous challenges in the modern day. In the past, roles and expectations were much more clearly defined. The passage to the future was a clear one, though not necessarily an easy one. Today, the increasing pressure society places on adolescents and the challenges they face result in considerable concern about the future that may not have been present in the past.

Elkind (1984:5-9) argues that the process of constructing an identity is negatively affected by the teenager’s being unplaced in society. He maintains that the pluralism of our society presents numerous options and choices to the teenager who is increasingly self-destructing because of a lack of capability to take hold of life. It is therefore essential for those working amongst the youth to truly understand their constituency, the challenges they are facing and the context in which their ministry efforts and endeavours take place.

2.8.1 The Challenge of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is the philosophy of the age which follows modernism. Simply put, modernism is basically the world view which drew the line between science and

religion, faith and superstition, truth and veracity. It demanded technical, scientific answers to the questions of faith and science, with proof and evidence. Modernism required that everything be rational, observable and repeatable (Swartz 1999:120). Since the beginning of modernism, a new approach has been gathering momentum and at the end of the 20th century, it claimed the dominant position, not only in the intellectual corridors of power, but throughout society in all corners of the globe, and particularly amongst the youth.

Swartz (1999:120) maintains that postmodernism is a reaction to modernism. It is a direct descendant of the existentialism of the 19th century, where the affective took precedence over the cognitive. Postmodernism is characterised by freedom of choice, rejection of creeds and a complete agnosticism with regard to truth.

With the advent of the Internet and other communication technologies, together with the growth of small business, particularly in the services field, people have now moved to a more individualised culture. The level of affluence and the importance now laid upon individual rights have created an environment in which individuals are more free to transform themselves than at any other time in history. They have the space to “shop” for new meaning and a new personal identity (Sunter 1996:70-71). It is proper to conclude that postmodernism is the world view that defines the challenges that are faced by 21st century teenagers.

Sunter (1996:73) charts the top seven disciplinary problems in US schools:

Table 2.3: Top seven disciplinary problems

1940	1990
Talking out of turn	Drug abuse
Chewing gum	Alcohol abuse
Making a noise	Sexual behaviour
Running in hallways	(Attempted) suicide
Queue-jumping	Rape, sexual assault
Ignoring dress code	Robbery, theft
Litter	Physical assault

It is obvious that the list on the left consists of minor infractions, whereas the one on the right, which represents the current era, is about major criminal activity.

Nel (2000:48) captures the dynamic of postmodernism by stating that South Africa probably contains a strange mixture of *pre-modern*, *modern* and *postmodern* philosophies. Yet he maintains that the postmodern consciousness is growing, and thinks that the church's reaction to this trend should differ from its former reactions to modernism and pre-modernism. Postmodernism, as it is currently understood, presents the church and the teenagers in particular with great new possibilities of presenting and serving God on earth with integrity and in a convincing way. The church should see postmodernism as a challenge towards becoming creatively involved with the youth of the 21st century.

2.8.2 The Challenge of Post-Christianity

For the past 500 years, Judeo-Christian morality has been the basis of *common decency* which everyone has taken for granted. Although Christianity's truth claims have been questioned, most people have at least had some grounding in Christianity before asking such questions. Most people who have rejected Christianity have at least known what they were rejecting, but this is not so today (Swartz 1999:121). Capturing the dynamic element of post-Christianity, Swartz (1999:121) astutely states that "we have grandparents who had a Christian belief, parents who have a memory of that belief, and now kids who have nothing".

Hendriks (1997:1008) in his research declares that we must realise that before 1994, the South African government was responsible for upholding Christian values. There were laws by then forbidding abortion, gambling, pornography, certain activities on a Sunday, etc. The local authorities also endorsed these laws. Furthermore, Christian principles and biblical lessons were taught in schools. However, in the new dispensation, the responsibility for upholding Christian values has been transferred from the state and secular authorities to believers and congregations.

However, the situation in regard to religious education has radically changed according to the SA manifesto on values, education and democracy. It states that faith, whatever its core might be, and however public its expression, is the consequence of spiritual journeying that is at heart, a voyage of intimacy. Religion,

which expresses it, is a matter of choice in conscience. And under the constitution, that choice – and the observances that go with it – is subject to protection as one of the freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights (Ministry of Education 2001:43).

2.8.3 The Challenge of Biblical Illiteracy

Modernism lent itself to memorisation, rote learning, recall, focus, hard and long learning, long hours (including Sunday School) and great discipline (getting up early – spending hours in God’s Word).

The world has changed. Time has also changed – the pace at which we live life has greatly accelerated. Swartz (1999:122) asserts that, there is now outcomes-based education with continuous assessment, interactive teaching and learning, more stimulation than ever before, more things to do, to read, to watch, to experience. For example, young people are more often found quoting a line from an Austin Powers movie than a poem or a Bible verse.

To indicate the contrast, the example of Charles Spurgeon can be given. As a 12-year-old, he occupied himself with his Sunday School homework and school work. Contrary to this, in the 21st century, teenagers in cities earn cash in their spare time, spend time with friends, play computer games, go to movies or the mall, visit Imax or theme parks and play Sony Playstation games. Their argument is why should they spend time memorising, when hand-held computers contain easy-reference word-search Bible concordances in a multitude of versions? Why memorise when it is online?

Writing about the issue of the biblically illiterate, Swartz (1999:122-123) suggests that, instead of mourning the past, people need to capture the present and use it for the education in Christian values of teenagers according to the tenor of the times. For example, computer technology, narrative theology, non-didactic teaching methods and popular media like *The Prince of Egypt* need to be utilised. All these should be harnessed creatively amongst teenagers. What is really needed is not memorisation of proof-text, but rather a more expansive overview of God’s plan as shown in the Scriptures, providing a much needed moral and theological framework for today’s information-overloaded teenagers and young people.

2.8.4 The Challenge of Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is now the leading cause of death among teenagers and accounts for more than 10 000 deaths each year. Although the use of drugs has levelled off after a threefold rise in the last decade and a half, alcohol use is becoming more widespread and is appearing among young age groups. According to a recent survey of junior high school students, 65% of the 13-year-olds had used alcohol at least once that year, some 35% used it once a month and 20% used it once a week. Of the 13-year-olds surveyed, 35% said that it was fun and all right to get drunk (Elkind 1984:6).

Benson and Senter (1987:77) define the term “substance” as usually used to include both alcohol and drugs, legal and illegal, as well as anything (such as glue) that might be used in an excessive way to produce a physical and emotional effect. It should be noted that, in as much as society considers substance abuse legal or illegal, the truth remains that both alcohol and drugs are potentially addictive and are dangerous to teenagers.

Emphasising the dangers of substance abuse, Benson and Senter (1987:77) further state that the world has undergone significant changes in its perception of drugs. People have moved from viewing drugs as a cure for the body, through a period where drugs were used to cure the mind, to the expectation that drugs should alter the body for convenience and pleasure. As the adolescent’s milieu becomes increasingly ill-defined, there is a natural correlation to the increasing challenge of substance abuse among teenagers. Norman and Harris (1981:87) in their report document the following about teenagers in drinking and drug abuse:

- 1 out of 4 high school teenagers drink more than once a week.
- 40% of teenagers smoke marijuana regularly.
- 7% out of 10 high school teenagers have tried marijuana.
- The majority of teens feel that their parents know they drink, but only 29% say their parents know they smoke pot.
- 50% of teens will lie to parents about pot use.
- 55% say that their parents have never discussed drugs.
- 62% of teens believe drinking is bad for their health but continue to drink.

- 68% of the non-smokers believe pot is dangerous, while only 36% of the smokers think pot is dangerous.

The reasons teenagers give for their drinking habits are varied and they mirror adult reasons, for example enjoying the sensation, wanting to relax and forget problems, indulging because it is the primary activity at a party or other social groupings, or because of boredom (Elkind 1984:90).

Mueller (1999:301-302) provides three other essential aspects related to teen drinking that parents should be aware of:

Firstly, teenagers find it easy to get alcohol. For example, many teenagers can get their alcohol out of the family liquor cabinet, from friends, or at a party. Almost two-thirds of the teenagers who drink buy their own alcoholic beverages.

Secondly, the United States National Center for Health Statistics (1996:15 in Mueller 1999) alludes to the fact that drinking and driving remains the number one killer of adolescents. Mueller (1999:301) states that while most students would say that it is wrong to drink and drive, roughly half will at least drink once during their teenage years or accept a ride from someone who has been drinking.

Thirdly, Mueller (1999:302) also notes that many parents encourage their children to drink through their behaviour, and some even provide alcohol in their own homes. They assume that their children will drink anyway, so why not give them the alcohol and the place to do it safely.

Francis (1984:81) maintains that historically, it has been the free churches which have stood out most strongly against alcohol. This tendency is still clearly reflected in the attitudes of the teenage members of the free churches. The overall tendency is for attitudes towards this issue to liberalise with age. Thus in a survey conducted on this issue, 43% of the Anglican 13- to 15-year-olds thought that it was wrong to get drunk, compared with 31% of the Anglican 16- to 20-year-olds. A similar trend occurred among the Roman Catholic teenagers, i.e. from 36% to 29% among the 13- to 15-year-olds and the 16- to 20-year-olds, respectively. Already more of the free church 13- to 15-year-olds (49%) considered it wrong to get drunk than their Anglican (43%) or Roman Catholic (36%) contemporaries. However, instead of

following the trend towards greater liberalisation with age, the free church members move in the opposite direction, so that two-thirds (66%) of the free church 16- to 20-year-olds took a decisive stand against drunkenness.

2.8.5 The Challenge of Sexual Activity

Sexual activity, at least among teenage girls, has more than tripled over the last two decades. In contrast to the 1960s, when only about 10% of teenage girls were sexually active, today more than 50% are sexually active. By the age of 19 at least 70% of young women are sexually active and four out of ten will become pregnant before they leave their teens. Currently about 1.3 million teenagers worldwide become pregnant each year, and more than a third of them are choosing to have and to keep their babies (Elkind 1984:7).

Benson and Senter (1987:79) confirm that the last 20 years have brought about a massive re-evaluation in our societal expectations of sexual conduct. The so-called sexual revolution is a fact of life to teenagers. For example, open nudity and sexual wakening are all glorified in movies geared to the teenager audience. The advertising industry creates erotic advertisements and sells sexuality as part of the total dress package. It is pathetic that legalised abortions, birth control pills and the lowering of the age of the first sexual experience should cloud the horizon. Teenagers see their divorced parents bring home lovers, and the “blended family” is the context in which nearly half of all teenagers will live their teen years.

Norman and Harris (1981:42) give the following alarming statistics:

- Nearly six out of ten 16- to 18-year-olds have had sex.
- Nearly one out of three 13 to 15-year-olds have had sex.
- The average age of the first sexual experience is 15 to 17,
- Nearly six out of ten sexually active teens do not use contraceptives.
- Nearly 75% of today’s teens have never discussed birth control with their parents.
- Almost all teenagers want more information about intercourse, birth control and venereal disease (in that order).

- Only 13% of teenage girls would marry the father of the baby if they become pregnant. Nearly three out of ten would get an abortion and the rest would keep the baby or give it up for adoption.

In the light of the psychological and cognitive unpreparedness of teenagers, the figures on teen pregnancy are startling (Clouse 1991:196). Each year more than a million American teenagers become pregnant, four out of five of them unmarried. The proportion of blacks is about twice that of whites.

Alexander (2004:43) describes sexual activity amongst teenagers in the new millennium:

Sexual issues today are not primarily to do with dating, necking, petting, and masturbation but pornography on the internet, cyber and virtual sex, homosexuality, 'living together', teenage pregnancies and abortion. Although every generation had its own set of risks and dangers, adolescents in the new millennium face a unique set of dangers. Some of these may include armed assault on campuses by fellow students, sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancies, single parent and no parent upbringing are some of them. We see similar trends in India, "22% of teens engage in pre-marital sex". 90.9% of even among the educated upper-class.

The Kaiser Family Foundation (The Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation 2000:12), in its comprehensive youth survey in South Africa, claims that many young people are sexually active and begin having sexual experiences at a very young age. Overall 31% of South African youth are sexually experienced (defined as having had sexual intercourse). Slightly fewer girls (28%) than boys (33%) report being sexually experienced. Those who live in rural areas are more likely to be sexually experienced compared to those who live in metropolitan areas (34%). Overall, those not attending school are the most likely to report being sexually experienced (63%).

High-risk ideas about HIV prevention persist at schools. In the *Sunday Times* (2004:7) it was reported that many South African teenagers are engaging in anal sex in the belief it will protect them from HIV/Aids and keep their virginity intact. The teenagers also favour the high-risk practice over conventional sex because it avoids

unwanted pregnancies. Despite the fact that anal sex carries the highest risk of HIV infection, at least 15% of 800 Grade 8 to 12 pupils surveyed at four urban and rural high schools in KwaZulu-Natal considered it a safe alternative.

The *Sunday Times* report (2004:7) strongly warned young people that “anal sex is actually more dangerous. Just as vaginal sex, young people need to be told that they need to use condoms for anal sex. In fact, they need to use stronger condoms”.

Importantly, the pressure to conform is no less for the Christian teenager. In fact, in their world, decisions are made based on what is “in” as opposed to eternal truth. Mueller (1994:87) asserts that sexual perversion has become normal in that it increasingly fails to draw opposition. Simply put, it is becoming acceptable material for songs, videos and concerts.

Figures from the University of Exeter study show that 10,6% of the girls aged 14-15 used magazines as their main source of information about sex, with 5% of boys saying the same (Vernon 1997:64). The Family Planning Association was quoted in the *Sunday Mirror* in November 1991 as saying that 24% of girls would rather consult a magazine problem page for advice on sexual matters than parents or friends (Vernon 1997:64).

While the youth report getting information about sex from many different sources, many (37%) learn about it first from friends. African youth, in particular, first learn about sex from their friends (41%), compared to 24% of whites, 22% of coloureds and 29% of Indians. School teachers are also a common source of sex information (18% of young people say they first learned about sex from school teachers). Fourteen per cent of youth say they first learned about sex from a family member. This includes those who first learned about sex from their mother only (7%), their father only (1%) or both parents (4%). Nine per cent say they first learned about sex from a television programme (Kayser Family Foundation 2000:24). Young people admit that they continue to learn about sexual matters from sources like television, school and health care workers, and written information sources like books, pamphlets and magazines.

This underscores the vital role that parents and other youth practitioners should play in sex education for teenagers. Information on sex must be in the framework as emotional guidance. Teenagers need to learn the importance of respecting the rights and feelings of others and developing loving, caring relationships as friends, members of a family and sexual partners.

2.8.6 The Challenge of Vanishing Markers

Elkind (1984:93) postulates that the absence of a special place for teenagers in our society is evidenced by the progressive erosion of the “markers” of their transition status. He likens markers to be as simple as the pencil lines on the kitchen wall that mark a child’s progress in height from birthday to birthday, or as complex as a well-deserved promotion after years of hard work and dedication. Markers are signs of progress to others as well as to ourselves.

Elkind (1984:93) continues by saying that people have a “sense of becoming”, of growing and changing as individuals. Markers confirm a sense of growing and changing, and this confirmation plays a vital role in the social as well as personal life of a person. However, certain markers mean much more when accompanied by social recognition. For example, confirmation, bar mitzvah, graduation exercises and the like provide a public acknowledgement that young people have attained new levels of maturity. This public recognition confirms teenagers in their sense of progress and growth.

Elkind (1984:94) finds that teenagers who are already under stress because of the many new demands placed on them are further stressed when many of the markers of their “pace” vanish. This is so because markers both protect teenagers against stress and lessen the kinds of stress by helping them attain a clear self-definition. They also reduce stress by supplying rules, limits, taboos and prohibitions that liberate teenagers from the need to make age-inappropriate decisions and choices.

2.8.7 The Challenge of Crime

According to Benson and Senter (1987:82), urbanisation and the changing configuration of the family have had a significant influence on juvenile and

adolescent crime. The number of delinquent teenagers appearing before juvenile courts has increased significantly. Crime rates have increased dramatically among teenagers. For many, crime is a regular part of their lives, in both the home and the school. For example, Elkind (1984:8) reports that every month, high schools in America experience 2.4 million thefts, almost 300 000 assaults and more than 100 000 robberies. Adolescent males between 17 and 20 are arrested for virtually every class of crime (including homicide) with greater frequency than any other age group. The record of children under 10 (55 000 arrests in 1980) is itself sobering and it gets seven times worse by age 14.

Young people name crime at the top of their five greatest concerns and challenges in South Africa today, and the majority (65%) indicate they are worried about their personal safety. Girls are more likely than boys to say that they are worried about their personal safety (71% versus 60%), though they are not more likely than boys to name crime as a serious concern. Concern about personal safety is also higher among young city dwellers (72%) than among those who live in rural areas (60%). While all groups are anxious about their personal safety, young Indians are particularly concerned as 87% express worry compared to 78% of coloureds, 69% of whites and 63% of Africans (Kaiser Family Foundation 2000:8).

According to Alexander (2004:47), the crime rate amongst teenagers is sky-rocketing. This generation alone is responsible for 54% of the crimes committed, and an increasing number of youth are from well-to-do families. About 40% of suicides are from this age bracket.

The reason for the sudden surge in teenage delinquency could be searched for in vain, but as noted in the preceding sections, teenagers are negotiating life in an era unlike any in history. Benson and Senter (1987:82) remark that teenagers are confronted by the implications of growing up much sooner than in previous generations, attempting to meet the challenges of life without the societal moorings of previous generations. The results are seen in activities that reflect both self-destructive hopelessness and peer group affinity.

2.8.8 The Challenge of Violence and Conflict

According to statistics released by the South African Police Service, there were roughly 105 000 incidents of “political unrest” during the period September 1984 to July 1994 in South Africa (Van Zyl Slabbert et al. 1994:150-152). More than 16 000 individuals lost their lives during these incidents and an additional 28 600 were injured. Significant numbers of young people and children were exposed to the protracted violence and societal instability that became a daily feature of life in many communities in South Africa.

On 26 July 2000 a turning point in the battle against entertainment violence was declared when four US national health associations directly linked violence in TV, music, video games and movies to increasing violence among children. This joint statement was made by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Paediatrics, the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychology and was the centrepiece of the Public Health Summit on Entertainment Violence (*The Denver Post* 2000:4A).

2.8.9 The Challenge of Health Impairments in Adolescence

The medical health system in Western industrialised nations is highly developed technologically. When compared with developing countries, these nations enjoy very favourable, material living conditions. For example, their welfare system prevents extreme social injustice and ensures a minimum of equality in terms of access to material resources (Hurrelmann & Maggs 1997:53).

Hurrelmann et al. (1997:53) postulate that despite the success of these nations in providing the general population with material goods and essential services, the social, mental and physical well-being of large numbers of young citizens is no way adequately provided for. To the contrary, children and adolescents pay high prices for the advanced industrialisation and urbanisation, a price that is exacted in physical, mental and social stress.

Equally important is that the majority of social, psychological and physiological symptoms that deviate from desired norms may be regarded as indicators of stress, as a bio-psycho-social state of tension resulting from a variety of stressors that confront

adolescents in modern-day industrial societies. For example, behavioural disorders and health impairments of various kinds are expressions of the challenges that confront adolescents in their attempts to come to terms with their bodies and the social and natural environments. These symptoms may be a sign of unsuccessful attempts to cope with demands and challenges teenagers are facing in the 21st century (Hurrelmann et al. 1997:53).

In the contemporary world, the situation of adolescents in the social world is comparable to that of adults, in that it is characterised by a considerable degree of tension. For example, adolescents of the 21st century have a great degree of freedom to organise their own *individual* lifestyles. Heitink (1999:28-29), in writing about the history of the individual process, states that individualism already came to the forefront in the period after the Middle Ages, in the Renaissance and Humanism Movements, but also in a movement like the Reformation. This is expressed in Luther's well known question: "How do I get a merciful God?" Humankind broke away from the collective and became an individual. As time passed by, this individual became more and more dependent on himself or herself.

Hurrelmann et al. (1997:53-54) observe that one price to be paid for these greater opportunities for individuality is a corresponding loosening of social and cultural terms; the road to modern society leads to increasing insecurity, to contradictory moral and ethical values and to an uncertain future. Unfortunately, this situation places adolescents, as well as adults, in a state of bio-psycho-social tension that can be labelled a "stress". Stress is healthy and essential to life as long as a person can cope with it; it is unhealthy and impairs development if the individual's coping capacities are overwhelmed.

Contrarily, the individualising process can also be viewed in a positive light. In other words, it can be viewed as individuation, a process that always takes place through participation. Simply put, individuation is a person who can truly be himself or herself, the one who lives in an open relationship with others (Heitink 1999:29).

Individuation involves the psychological work of disembedding the self from the various roles, relationships, and symbolic meanings that compose an adolescents' world in order to construct a self that is brought to and

expressed through roles, relationships, and symbolic meaning (Osmer 1996:21).

Furthermore, individuation allows adolescents to make their way through the wide range of differentiated institutions in which they participate on the basis of a coherent and self-conscious understanding of themselves. Moreover, it helps them achieve a voice and moral perspective that can be brought to the pluralistic conversation of contemporary life. It also enables them to be more adept at resisting the manipulation of the media, charismatic leaders and political propaganda (Osmer 1996:22).

2.8.10 The Challenge of Family Variables and Adolescent Adjustment

Adolescents are hindered in their ability to deal with stresses associated with this period of their lives. In general, adolescents are better adjusted when family is seen as cohesive, expressive and organised, and independency encouraged. On the other hand, they tend to be less well adjusted when they see their family high in conflict and very controlling (Noller & Callan 1991:19).

Some theorists argue that the stresses related to adolescents arise from the adolescents' lack of interpersonal skills to cope with all the changes necessary to move toward greater independence and autonomy (Noller & Callan 1991:20). On the other hand, in supportive families, they are likely to develop better social and coping skills and more positive identities. It has been observed that, where parents consistently demonstrate good coping and problem-solving skills, and encourage the adolescents to solve their own problems, they are likely to cope much better, be more confident about their ability to cope and consequently have higher self-esteem. Noller and Callan (1991:20) agree that in these circumstances, adolescents are more likely to develop a positive cycle, involving growing confidence, rather than a negative cycle of rebellion or depression.

2.8.11 The Challenge of Professionalising the Youth Ministry

Swartz (1999:130) states that with an estimated 17 million South Africans below the age of 18, any serious attempt to launch youth ministry programmes must address the

vast numerical challenges: the question is “how many youth workers are needed in South Africa?” rather than the more parochial “where can a particular church find a youth worker?” SAQA (the South African Qualifications Authority) has already begun setting up guidelines for minimum qualifications for various industries, including youth work. It is recommended that churches be involved in this process to ensure that minimum levels of care are set up to include spiritual input as well. It is also important to focus our attention on providing the kind of training environment that will ensure that Christian youth workers are the best qualified youth workers in the country.

Swartz (1999:130) further states that the church in South Africa needs to envision a youth ministry culture in which qualified men and women in significant numbers make a career out of youth ministry, either in the context of the local church or through para-church agencies. Such a culture requires considerable infrastructure, and importantly, it also needs to be informed and influenced by thinkers whose ideas and writings maintains a sharp edge. Youth work must be recognised as a profession (a vocation) rather than a bus stop while waiting to move on to more ‘mature’ pursuits.

2.8.12 The Challenge of Non-traditional Families

Indeed, non-traditional families present another challenge to teenagers in the 21st century. Churches and society have ignored the needs of these youth who require support and attention.

The divorce rate has begun to level out in an alarmingly high plateau: DeVries (1994:105) indicates that approximately 40% of marriages that begin this year will end in divorce. Of the couples who divorce, approximately 70% have children under 18. All recent studies of the effects of divorce on children indicate that there is, in the words of Andre Brooks, “frequently a substantial period of emotional and practical child neglect following parental separation” (DeVries 1994:105).

Noller and Callan (1991:108) find that young people are stressed by the divorce of parents, and these stresses occur on top of existing problems at school, with friends or in their acceptance of themselves. The separation may also take away from

adolescents the parent they love the most. Alternatively, the separation can reduce tension in the family, and bring adolescents into a relationship with one parent that is more supportive and loving than in the past. In other words, separation and divorce have many different outcomes which may aid or hinder the adolescents' success in dealing with the developmental tasks that they will naturally experience.

However, Noller and Callan (1991:108) conclude that there is no single scenario, and that there is obvious considerable variation in how adolescents respond to divorce. There are both short- and more long-term effects. Gender and age differences, and pre-existing factors, for example existing psycho-pathology in a divorcing parent, do seem to influence the post-divorce adjustment of children.

In writing about family breakdown and divorce, Swartz (1999:125) argues that most young people would not have experienced the typical early 20th-century nuclear family. He asserts that it is currently estimated that one in every four American teenagers will experience family breakdown by the time they turn 21.

Price and Associates (in Swartz 1999:125ff) in their research found the statistics to be slightly better in South Africa, with only one in three young people currently experiencing family breakdown, yet the trend is ever downwards. However, DeVries (1994:106) remarks that in a recent extensive study of the effects of divorce on children, one fact stands out as a stark indictment to churches. Less than 10% of those children of divorce who were interviewed "had any adult speak to them sympathetically as the divorce unfolded".

2.8.13 The Challenge of Identity and Meaning

According to psychologists, teenagers are at a stage when they are seeking to find their own identity but also re-examining their beliefs and testing relationships. Alexander (2004:47) remarks that this seeking for identity and re-examination of beliefs makes them adventurous and explorative.

Erikson (in Ratcliff & Davies 1991:190-191) views adolescence as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood in which the adolescent is searching for

identity. The teenage asks himself or herself questions such as: Who am I? Where did I come from? Am I leading toward some kind of understandable future? What is life about? Only at adolescence stage, according to Erikson, has the teenager encountered serious pressure that motivates him or her to start defining himself or herself and ultimately settling on an identity (Zuck & Benson 1978:14).

Friedenberg in Zuck and Benson (1978:14-15) argues that there must be a conflict between the adolescent and society as a consequence of this task of self-definition:

Adolescence is a period during which a young person learns who he is, and what he really feels. It is the time during which he differentiates himself from his culture, though on the culture's terms. It is the age which, by becoming a person in his own right, he becomes capable of deeply felt relationships to other individuals perceived clearly as such... Must there be conflict between the adolescent and society? The point is that adolescence is conflict protected, conflict - between the individual and society.

One of the goals for the adolescents at this stage is to harmonise their past and future, to achieve self-certainty, to come to terms with sexual identity and to develop an ideology or set of beliefs (Ratcliff & Davies 1991:191). Simply put, adolescents need to discover themselves and find their own identity in both felt and real needs. This must be achieved to some degree before they will work hard for any goal in life.

2.8.14 The Challenge of Finding the Resources

The 1996 South Africa census indicated that 34% of South Africans are under the age of 15. A total of 54% (some 21 929 512 young people) of the population is under the age of 25 years. Research done by youth students at the Baptist Theological College, Randburg, indicates that as many as 75% of people becoming Christians do so before the age of 18. It is also clear that young people are more open to the Gospel than adults. If the church's role is to spread the Gospel using limited resources, then the most likely way to be effective is through youth ministry, or by focusing on things that affect young people.

Swartz (1999:130) rightly claims that the churches routinely dole out their scraps to youth ministry, although there are some notable exceptions. Specialist service

agencies, existing solely for the purpose of pursuing youth evangelism objectives and youth ministry noble endeavours are notoriously underfunded. Churches have to work towards allocating a much larger percentage of their income to youth ministry, including youth ministry programmes outside of their local church, possibly through specialist service agencies like Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth for Christ etc., which may have greater skills in penetrating unchurched youth in various subcultures. Swartz (1999:131) says that funding for mission work comes primarily through God's people, and sacrificial giving remains the predominant biblical pattern. Indeed, there is a cost involved towards meeting the challenge of ushering Generation 21 into the kingdom of God.

2.9 Conclusion

The challenges facing the 21st century teenagers are phenomenal and cannot be avoided. They affect them in the home, community and the church. It is evident from this chapter that everything done in youth ministry should be informed by theology. Youth leaders should know the different theories that dominate the contemporary understanding of children and youth, in particular, in their development. These theories form an appropriate backdrop for the conceptualisation of the challenges youth are facing. It is therefore compulsory for the youth leaders to study and learn more about the youth and their needs, so that they will be more effective in reaching and ministering to them.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A research design is a framework or blueprint for conducting the particular research project. It details the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve research problems. Although a broad approach to the problem has already been developed, the research design specifies the details – the nuts and bolts – of implementing that approach. A research design lays a foundation for conducting the project effectively and efficiently (Malhotra 1999:83).

Rubin and Babbie (1993: 92) argue that the term “research design” basically has two connotations. One connotation refers to alternative logical arrangements to be selected. This connotes experimental research designs, correlation research designs and others in that category. The other connotation deals with the act of designing the study in the broadest sense. This refers to all the decisions made in planning the study - decisions not only about what overall type or design to use, but also about sampling, sources and procedures for collecting data, measurement issues and data analysis plans. Prior to the detailed explanation about research design and methodology employed in this study, the researcher will briefly explain practical theology aspect as mentioned in chapter one.

3.2 Practical Theology

As stated in 1.9.1, Heitink (1996:6) defines practical theory as a theory of action that “is the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society”.

Heitink (1996:8) names the mediation of the Christian faith Praxis 1, and the praxis of modern society Praxis 2. Praxis 1 shows that the object of practical theology is situated in the intentional, more specifically, intermediary or meditative actions, with the purpose of bringing in an agological way or change in a specific situation. Praxis 2 emphasises the context in which these actions takes place as a dynamic context in

which men and women (adolescents) in society interact, whether or not their actions are religiously motivated while pursuing various goals.

Heitink (1996:165-153) further states that practical theology recognises the interaction between theory and praxis. Simply put, praxis is the actions of individuals and groups who are inspired by the Christian tradition and who focus on salvation. Theory is a more comprehensive, hermeneutical-theological statement that relates the Christian tradition to experience. The relation between theological theory and ecclesiastical praxis is not determined by a complete separation nor by an identification of the two, but by a bipolar tension-filled combination.

A theory of praxis which has been adopted in this study has been chosen as its point of departure, namely the challenges that the youth are facing in the 21st century. Simply put, it refers to the daily world of the youth and the situation of the church and society. It is characterised by a method of theory that takes empirical data seriously. The findings of the results will be verified or not at the end of chapter four.

The next section will discuss the types of qualitative research design.

3.3 Types of Quantitative Research Design

Malhotra (1999) distinguishes the following research designs:

- a. **Exploratory research** provides insights into, and an understanding of, the problem confronting the researcher. It is used in cases when the researcher defines the problem more precisely, identifies relevant courses of action, or gains additional insights before an approach can be developed (Malhotra 1999:83).
- b. **Causal research** is used to obtain evidence of cause-and-effect relationships. Causal research is appropriate for the following purposes: (a) to understand which variables are the cause (independent variables) and which variables are the effect (dependent variables) of a phenomenon, (b) to determine the nature of the relationship between the causal variables and the effect to be predicted (Malhotra 1999:94-95).

- c. **Descriptive research** describes something – usually characteristics of relevant groups, such as consumers, salespeople, organisations, or market areas. Descriptive research assumes that a researcher has a great deal of prior knowledge about the problem situation (Malhotra 1999:87). In fact, a major difference between exploratory and descriptive research, according to Malhotra (1999:87), is that descriptive research is characterised by the prior formulation of specific hypotheses. Thus, the information needed is clearly defined.

The descriptive design method has been adopted for this study, and the researcher used a set of scientific methods and procedures to collect the data that describes the existing characteristics of a defined target population (Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2003:41) The advantage of adopting this method is its ability to accommodate large sample sizes at relatively low costs. Using a large sample increases the geographic flexibility of the research.

The distinction between the qualitative and quantitative research approaches will be discussed in the next section.

3.4 The Distinction between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches

All research approaches rest upon a bedrock axiom: The nature of the data and the problem for the research dictate the research methodology (Leedy 1993:139).

Hair et al. (2003:211) argue that although there are vast differences between the two approaches, there is no single agreed-on set of factors that distinguishes them as being mutually exclusive.

Qualitative research design is referred to as a selected research method used in exploratory research design. Its main objective is to gain preliminary insights into decision problems and opportunities (Hair et al. 2003:212). Furthermore, Leedy (1993:140) states that the qualitative research approach is a creative, scientific process that necessitates a great deal of time and critical thinking, as well as

emotional and intellectual energy. The researcher must have a true desire to discover meaning, to develop understanding and explain phenomena in the most thorough way possible. It is not slovenly, undisciplined, “soft” research but creative scholarship at its best.

Quantitative research, according to Hair et al. (2003:211), is commonly associated with surveys or experiments. It places a heavy emphasis on using formalised standard questions and predetermined response options in questionnaires or surveys administered to large numbers of respondents. Leedy (1993:248-249) asserts that in quantitative study, data is analysed statistically so that the researcher may infer meanings that lie hidden within the data, or discern certain potentials and dynamic forces that may be clues to areas that warrant further investigation. The quantitative research method has been adopted in this study for economically and timely data collection, its validation of facts, estimates, relationships, predictions and its accuracy of recording behaviours etc.

The next section will discuss the data collection of this study.

3.5 Data Collection

There are three widely accepted and used data collection methods, namely observation, experimental and survey methods.

3.5.1 Observation

Observation is a type of methodology used in descriptive research. It involves recording the behavioural patterns of people, objects and events in a systematic manner to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest (Malhotra 1999:196). Hair et al. (2003:290) indicate that the main characteristic of all observational techniques is that researchers must rely heavily on their powers of observing rather than actually communicating with people to collect the primary data. Basically, the researcher depends on watching and recording what people or objects do in many different research situations.

3.5.2 Experimental

Leedy (1993:295) lists the various names of experimental methodology: the experimental method, the cause-and-effect method, the pretest-posttest control group design or the laboratory method. By whatever name, the basic idea behind the experimental study is to attempt to account for the influence of factors conditioning a given situation. Furthermore, the experimental research method attempts to control the entire research situation, except for certain input variables that then become suspect as the cause of whatever change has taken place within the investigative design.

3.5.3 Survey

The survey method, according to Malhotra (1999:178), is based on the questioning of respondents. In this study, respondents were asked a variety of questions regarding their attitudes towards church attendance, their practice of sexual intercourse, their behaviour in drug abuse and the peer pressure they experience, and their demographics and lifestyle characteristics were also considered. The questionnaire was in writing, and the responses were obtained from the respondents by either the researcher or the moderators.

The survey research method was adopted and modified for this study because it was simple, appropriate and relevant for the study under investigation. The data obtained was reliable because the responses were limited to the alternatives stated. The use of fixed-response questions reduces the variability in the results that may be caused by differences in the interviewers (Malhotra 1999:178). Finally, coding, analysis and interpretation of data are relatively simple in this method.

In the next section, the questionnaire development and content analysis of this study will be discussed in detail.

3.6 Questionnaire Development

According to Hair et al. (2003:450), two important issues relating to question phrasing that have a direct impact on survey designs are: (1) the type of question format phrasing (unstructured or structured) and (2) the quality of the question (good or bad). The researcher will briefly explain the first issue because it is commonly used:

3.6.1 Unstructured Questions

Unstructured questions are open-ended questions formatted to allow respondents to reply in their own words. This type of question requires more thinking and effort on the part of respondents. If administered correctly, unstructured questions can provide the researcher with a rich array of information.

3.6.2 Structured Questions

Structured questions are closed questions that require the respondent to choose from a predetermined set of responses or scale points. This question format reduces the amount of thinking and effort required by respondents. In general, structured questions are more popular than unstructured ones in offline and online self-administered questionnaires.

During the literature review, the following points were highlighted as areas of concern for youth behaviour: church attendance, premarital sex, drug abuse, violence and peer pressure. Therefore, the questionnaire development took these points into consideration. The researcher, in consultation with the study supervisor and statistics department, generated guideline questions that would help to focus the survey process. Questions followed the sequence given below:

- a) The demographics of the respondents;
- b) church attendance;
- c) sexual life;
- d) social life; and
- e) peer pressure.

In the next section, the researcher will discuss the sampling employed in this study, and how it was executed in the field.

3.6.3 Content Analysis

Several sources of literature were consulted in order to learn about various instruments available to measure behaviour of respondents. The following categorical variables were adopted for use in describing frequencies:

Tick the one which is true

		2
		3

Likert scale

			1
			2
			3

This scale was used to measure the intensity of feelings.

Yes or no

Yes	No
-----	----

Tick the one which is true to you

Often	1
Seldom	2
Never	3

3.6.4 Editing

A questionnaire was sent to both the study supervisor and the statistics department for editing and comments. After the process of editing, a final questionnaire was compiled.

3.6.5 Executing the Sampling Process

The youth pastors of the two churches under investigation were contacted by telephone. The researcher discussed the purpose of the research, and the youth pastors agreed. Judgemental sampling was employed, and the youth were screened by the youth leaders to meet the following three qualifications:

- Regular worship attendance
- Attend either Grace Bible Church in Soweto or Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park
- Aged from 14 to 18 years

This will be discussed in more detail in section 3.9.3.

A pilot study was executed prior to the main research work, and the following section will discuss that fully.

3.7 Pilot Study

Devos et al. (2002:210) state that in order to undertake scientific research on a specific problem, the researcher should have thorough background knowledge about it. The pilot study is one way in which the prospective researcher can orientate himself or herself to the project he or she wants to do. Mouton (2001: 103) indicates that one of the most common errors in doing research is that no pilot study or pretesting is done.

Researchers are strongly warned to never start the main enquiry unless they are confident that the chosen procedures are suitable, valid, reliable, effective and free from problems and errors, or at least that they have taken all possible precautions to

avoid any problems that might arise during the study (Sarantakos, 2000: 29). The pilot study is vitally important and necessary for the successful execution and completion of a research project. According to Devos et al. (2002:210), the function of the pilot study is the exact formulation of the research problem, and a tentative planning of the modus operandi and a range of the investigation.

Bless & Higson-Smith (2000: 155) define a pilot study as a small study conducted prior to a larger piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate.

The researcher conducted the pilot study on two small groups, nine respondents from the International Gospel Church in Sebokeng and six respondents from the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Eldorado Park. The respondents were encouraged to ask questions that they may have as they responded to the questionnaires, and they were at liberty to criticise or give some comments. They were asked to comment on the wording, the sequence, possible redundant questions, missing and confusing words, etc. After that exercise, the researcher in consultation with the promoter and statistics department had to rewrite and edit all items that caused confusion, annoyance, boredom, and so on (Devos 2002:214). The comments and recommendations were immensely valuable to the researcher's main investigation.

The fieldwork will be fully discussed in the next section.

3.8 Fieldwork

3.8.1 The Moderators

Four moderators were invited to monitor the completion of the questionnaires in the churches under investigation. A two-hour training session was conducted by the researcher for the moderators. The purpose of the training was to make sure that the moderators understood their important role in making the research project a success. They were taught skills of approaching the respondents and different sections of the questionnaire were clarified. The researcher assumed a supervisory role to monitor the moderators in the field during the actual research time. In most cases, the

researcher was asked to clarify questions and was also able to follow up issues highlighted by the respondents.

3.8.2 The Drop-off Survey Technique

Another technique that was used was a drop-off survey. It was used because there were many activities taking place and the respondents were not available during the time of this survey in one of the churches. This technique, according to Hair et al. (2003:266), involves a representative of the researcher hand-delivering surveys to respondents; the completed surveys are picked up by the representative. The researcher adopted this technique because the youth pastor was available for the orientation regarding the sample questionnaire, willing to answer general questions, screen the potential respondents and spur interest in completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire sample was well-co-ordinated by an experienced person, and a sizable number of respondents responded well to the questionnaire.

In total, 170 questionnaires were distributed to three churches. The reason for providing an extra 20 was for replacements when questionnaires had been spoiled. This process was successful, as youth pastors from the churches under investigation encouraged teenagers to participate.

In the following section, the sampling plan and techniques employed will be discussed.

3.9 Sampling

Sampling involves selecting a relatively small number of elements and expecting that the information gathered from the small group will allow judgements to be made about the larger group (Hair et al. 2003:333).

The concept of sampling plays an important role in three different areas: (1) in the process of identifying and understanding objects that need to be investigated by the researcher, (2) the process of developing the scale measurements used to actually collect primary data about the objects or people, and (3) in the process of designing

questionnaires, depending on the redefined information problem and the selected target population, sampling decisions will affect the decisions regarding the type of the research design (in the case of this study, descriptive method), the survey instrument and the actual questionnaire's structural design attributes (Hair et al. 2003:333).

A questionnaire, according to Malhotra (1999:293), whether it is called a schedule, interview form, or measurement instrument, is a formalised set of questions for obtaining information from respondents.

Sampling plans (Hair et al. 2003:42, Leedy 1993:200, Malhotra 1999:335-336) can be classified into two general types: probability and non-probability. In probability sampling plans, each member of the defined target population has a known, non-zero chance of being drawn into a sample group. Probability sampling gives the researcher the opportunity to assess the existence of sampling error. In contrast, non-probability sampling, which has been adopted in this study, plans to eliminate the true assessment of sampling error existence and limit the generalisability of any information to larger groups of people other than that group which provided the original raw data.

3.9.1 Non-probability Sampling Techniques

Convenience sampling attempts to obtain a sample of convenient elements. The selection of sampling units is left primarily to the interviewer. Often, respondents are selected because they happen to be in the right place at the right time (Malhotra et al. 2003:335).

Quota sampling is a variant of convenience sampling. It selects respondents in the same ratio as they are found in the general population (Leedy 1993:200).

Judgemental or purposive sampling is a form of convenience sampling in which the researcher, exercising judgement or expertise, chooses the elements to be included in the sample, because he or she believes that they are representative of the population of interest or otherwise appropriate (Malhotra et al. 2003:335).

The non-probability sampling strategy that has been adopted in this study is a judgemental sampling. According to Babbie (1992:230), judgemental sampling is selecting a sample on the basis of the researcher's own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research. With this sampling, there is no way of determining the probability that any particular sampling unit will actually be included in the sample population. Some members of the target group (in this case teenagers) are assured of selection, while others are excluded. The chance of selection is actually unknown to the respondents. However, the researcher is aware that this method of sampling may produce a biased and unrepresentative sample and the results cannot be generalised to the entire population, as they may be highly unreliable.

3.9.2 Elements of Sampling

Elements of sampling are defined as objects about which or from which the information is desired. In survey research, the element is usually a respondent (Malhotra et al. 2003:330). This study initially focused on the Christian youth from the Grace Bible Church in Soweto and Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park. The following elements were considered from the respondents under investigation: The age group between 14 to 18 years, the race consisted of the black and coloured populations, and the gender included both male and female.

In the following section, the actual execution of the sampling will be explained.

3.9.3 Executing the Sampling Process

The youth pastors of the two churches under investigation were contacted by telephone. Subsequently, follow-up was done to confirm the appointments. Confirmation was received by telephone and email. This process was completed two weeks in advance of the actual survey of the two churches. Judgemental sampling was employed, and the youth were screened by moderators to meet the following qualifications:

- Regular worship attendance

- Attend either Grace Bible Church in Soweto or Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park
- Aged from 14 to 18 years

To obtain a representative sample of qualified individuals, the random method was used to select the respondents from among the youth. The questionnaires were distributed to them, and a brief guidance session was held by the researcher, accompanied by moderators, for the respondents.

The sample size was 150 and 120 respondents managed to complete the questionnaire. The completion rate was 80%. Eight respondents did not complete the questionnaire.

3.9.4 Problems Encountered

After everything was well prepared for execution in the field, the researcher discovered that the respondents at Grace Bible Church in Soweto were not available on the dates that had been set. As an alternative, the researcher discussed the entire sample process with two pastors and youth leaders of Grace Bible Church and Koinonia Bible Church in Sebokeng. They cooperated with the researcher, and the sample was executed successfully without any hindrance. The research continued as planned with one more church added, and that resulted in the total of three churches that participated in the empirical research of this study.

3.10 Coding

Malhotra et al. (2003:422) define coding as assigning a code, usually a number, to each possible response to each question. The code includes an indication of the column (field) and date record it will occupy. For example, sex of respondents may be coded as 1 for females and 2 for males. The coloured race may be coded as 1 and the black as 2 etc. All demographic personality characteristics of a respondent are contained in a single record. After coding the questionnaires, the researcher took them to the statistics department at the University of Pretoria for analysis purposes.

3.11 Data Analysis

Malhotra et al. (2003:419) caution that before the raw data contained in the questionnaires can be subjected to statistical analysis, it must be converted into a form suitable for analysis. It is said that the quality of statistical results depends on the care exercised in the data preparation phase.

The questionnaires were checked for incomplete, inconsistent and ambiguous responses. Seven questionnaires were discarded based on the consideration that the sample size was sufficiently large and the proportion of unsatisfactory respondents was small. This resulted in a final sample size of 120, i.e. 80%.

3.12 Statistical Analysis

The following statistical procedures were carried out during analysis stage by the statistics department:

Descriptive statistical analysis

According to Mouton (1996:163), descriptive statistics organises and summarises the data to render it more comprehensible. The following categorical variables were adopted to describe the statistical analysis of the study under discussion:

(1) Gender

A gender distribution was calculated first according to the teenagers in the three churches under discussion. Firstly, they were calculated as a whole and secondly, as per culture.

(2) Race

The data was grouped into two groups, i.e. coloureds and blacks.

(3) Age

Ages 14 to 18 years were included in the data.

(4) Educational grade

The data was tabulated from Grade 8 to those who had left school.

(5) Church attendance

The data was classified according to church attendance from four weeks down to non-attendance or frequency.

(6) Reason for attending church

The data was classified according to the reason the youth attend church services.

(7) Youth service comments

The data was classified according to the comments the respondents gave regarding the youth service. For example, youth service is empowering young people to face challenges in the world.

(8) Dating

The data was classified according to the respondents who were engaged in dating.

(9) Sex awareness/education

The data was tabulated according to where the respondents first learned about sex education.

(10) Sexual intercourse

The data was collected to determine the sexual intercourse practice by the respondents.

(11) Contraceptive usage

The data was collected to determine the usage of contraceptives by the respondents during sexual intercourse.

Numbers 12 to 17 cover the following items: alcohol usage, smoking, drug usage, suicide, violence and weapons. The data was used to determine the usage of all the above elements, and was also classified according to race, age and gender.

(18) Appropriate statement

The data was tabulated according to the feelings the respondents had towards their parents and friends.

3.13 Validity of Data

Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the subject under investigation (Babbie 1992:132). The adapted different scales as reflected under 3.6.3 were successful in measuring the respondents under investigation. The added dimensions were established during a credible process carried out by the experienced moderator with experienced and knowledgeable respondents in the three churches. However, the questionnaire was the result of the combined efforts of the study supervisor, statistics department and the researcher.

3.14 Reliability of Data

The moderators were trained in both monitoring the questionnaire completion and approaching the respondents to participate.

3.15 Conclusion

The research design, methodology and practical theology described in this chapter resulted in gathering the needed information for the empirical research which was implemented in this study. They ensured that the objectives of this study were met successfully. The researcher is of the opinion that the methods used were the best for the completion of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the empirical research phase. The quantitative research findings are presented in tables and figures. Below every table and figure, a brief discussion and explanation is given of the data.

It should be noted that, in most of the tables, there is an “unidentified” percentage of the data. This represents the respondents who did not indicate their score, but continued to complete the rest of the questionnaire.

The chapter concludes by discussing the overall findings, verifying the results, and synthesising and interpreting them.

The categorical variables as set out in chapter 3 are discussed below.

(1) Gender

Table 4.1: Gender distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	39	33%
Female	79	66%
Total	118	

Female respondents dominated the sample, comprising 66% of the overall results. Only 33% of respondents were male. This figure is not surprising as it has been noted that in most churches, female participants always take the lead in church attendance.

(2) Race

Table 4.2: Race distribution

Race	Frequency	Percentage
Black	76	63%
Coloured	44	37%
Total	120	

63% of the respondents were black and 37% were coloured. Given the sample size that was used for blacks and coloureds, respectively, the results are reasonably acceptable.

(3) Age

Table 4.3: Age distribution

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
14	26	22%
15	19	16%
16	17	14%
17	26	22%
18	29	24%
Total	117	

Of all the respondents that gave their age, 24,8% were 18 years old. The 14- and 17-year-olds each represented 22,2% of the sample and 14,5% were 16 years of age.

(4) Educational grade

Table 4.4: Educational grade distribution

Educational grade	Frequency	Percentage
Grade 8	20	17%
Grade 9	21	18%
Grade 10	20	17%
Grade 11	26	22%
Grade 12	18	15%
Post-grade 12	4	3%
Left school	3	3%
Total	119	

Table 4.4 indicates that the respondents in Grade 11 had the highest representation at 22%, followed by those in Grade 9 at 18%. The respondents in Grades 8 and 10

polled 17% each. According to this table, the number of respondents decreases as the grade level increases, for example only 15% of Grade 12 respondents attend a church service, only 3% were post-grade respondents and 3% had left school. Only 7% did not identify their educational status.

Barna (1995:85-86) confirms the findings under discussion by stating that many teenagers, having been exposed to and been participants in the teaching, worship, study, prayer and other central activities of the Christian church, are already making their getaway plans. They have given the church a fair shot at convincing them to stay. Their exposure to the church in action, however, has led millions of them to choose to end their interaction with institutional Christianity once they have the freedom to do so.

(5) Church attendance

Table 4.5: Church attendance distribution

Number of times per month	Frequency	Percentage
Four times	57	48%
Three times	30	25%
Twice	25	21%
Once	4	3%
Never	2	2%
Total	120	

This table indicates that 48% of the respondents attend church services four times in a month, and only 3% once a month. 25% of the respondents indicated three times and 21% indicated twice a month. 2% of the respondents did not indicate the number of times they attend church services.

(6) Reason for attending church

Table 4.6: Reason for attending church distribution

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
I follow my parents	13	11%
I am personally interested	77	64%
I want to satisfy my friends	0	0%
I heard that my moral and ethical life will improve	20	17%
Specify other reasons	6	5%
Total	116	

Table 4.6 indicates that 64% of the respondents were personally interested in attending a church service. Furthermore, 17% attended a church service because their moral and ethical lives would improve, and 11% of the respondents simply followed their parents.

(7) Youth service comments

Table 4.7: Youth service comments distribution

Statement	Agree (Frequency and percentage)	Disagree (frequency and percentage)	Unidentified (frequency and percentage)	Total (frequency and percentage)
I feel my church does not understand me	20 17%	84 70%	16 13%	120 100%
Youth leaders do not address our felt needs	30 25%	72 60%	18 15%	120 100%
The input in the youth services is more balanced and satisfying	71 59%	36 30%	13 11%	120 100%
Our youth services are empowering to face challenges in the world	82 68%	24 20%	14 12%	120 100%
Youth is represented in decision making of the church	64 53%	34 28%	22 18%	120 100%

In commenting about the youth service, the largest percentage (68%) of the respondents indicated that the youth service empowered them to face challenges in the world. 25% indicated that the youth leaders did not address their felt needs. 59% indicated that the input in youth services was more balanced and satisfying, but 30% indicated that the input in the youth service was not balanced. The 60% of respondents who indicated that youth leaders do not address their felt needs is quite

high, and it confirms the purpose statement of this study that youth leaders need to understand the challenges faced by the youth of today.

The 53% of the respondents who indicated that they were represented in decision making of the church is encouraging. The 17% who felt that the church did not understand them is alarming indeed.

(8) Dating

Table 4.8: Dating distribution

Involvement in dating	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	37	31%
No	71	59%
Total	108	

Some 59% of the respondents indicated that they were not dating someone at the time of the study, and 31% confirmed that they were. Overall, according to these results, dating is not a major challenge amongst the respondents.

(9) Sex awareness/education

Table 4.9: Sex awareness/education distribution

Sex awareness amongst teenagers	Frequency	Percentage
From my parents at home	32	27%
From my friends	20	17%
From my teachers	29	24%
From my youth pastor	3	3%
From reading books	6	5%
From television	25	21%
From books and magazines	1	1%
Total	120	

In answering the question of the source of sex education, 27% indicated that they had received it from their parents, whilst 24% indicated that they received it from their teachers. It is striking that 21% indicated that they received their sex education from television and 17% from friends.

(10) Sexual intercourse

Table 4.10: Sexual intercourse distribution

Reason for being involved in sexual intercourse	Frequency	Percentage
I wanted to know what it felt like	15	13%
It provides a thrill	3	3%
I was lonely and felt bored	1	1%
It feels good to do it	3	3%
It is a natural thing to do	3	3%
It releases a tension	1	1%
I did not want to be different	2	2%
Total	28	

Only 28 confirmed that they were involved in sexual activity. 13% of the respondents said that they became involved because they had wanted to know what it felt like to have sexual intercourse.

(11) Contraceptive usage

Table 4.11: Contraceptive usage distribution

Frequency of usage	Frequency	Percentage
Often	27	23%
Seldom	5	4%
Never	47	39%
Total	79	

Only 79 respondents answered this question and 39% of them indicated that they never used contraceptives when engaging in sexual intercourse.

(12) Alcohol usage

Table 4.12: Alcohol usage distribution

Whether alcohol is taken	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	8	7%
No	105	88%
Total	113	

According to this table, alcohol usage is not a major challenge to the youth in the church. 88% of the respondents indicated that they did not use alcohol, whilst 7% indicated that they did.

(13) Smoking

Table 4.13: Smoking distribution

Whether respondents smoke	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	3	3%
No	111	93%
Total	114	

93% respondents indicated that they did not smoke and 3% said that they did. This score does not appear as a serious challenge in the church amongst the teenagers.

(14) Drug usage

Table 4.14: Drug usage distribution

Whether drugs are used	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	2	2%
No	109	91%
Total	111	8%

Table 4.14 indicates that 91% of the interviewed respondents answered that they did not abuse drugs and 2% answered that they did. This score indicates that drug abuse is not a major challenge in the church.

(15) Suicide

Table 4.15: Suicide distribution

Frequency of suicide thoughts	Frequency	Percentage
Often	9	8%
Seldom	23	19%
Never	81	68%
Total	7	6%

68% of the respondents indicated that they had not thought of committing suicide during the time-span indicated in the questionnaire. 19% indicated that they seldom contemplated suicide and only 8% indicated they often thought of it. According to this score, suicide is a challenge in the church.

(16) Violence

Table 4.16: Violence distribution

Committed acts of violence	Frequency	Percentage
Often	13	11%
Seldom	28	23%
Never	72	60%
Total	114	

This table indicates that 60% of the respondents in the churches under investigation never engaged in acts of fighting, hitting or injuring another person during the time-span indicated in the questionnaire. However, 11% were often engaged in these acts and 23% indicated that they were seldom engaged in violence. As far as violence is concerned, the overall 34% score is a high percentage and is a challenge amongst the youth in the church.

(17) Weapons

Table 4.17: Weapons distribution

Use/carry a weapon	Frequency	Percentage
Often	3	3%
Seldom	8	7%
Never	100	83%
Total	111	

This table indicates that 83% of the respondents never carried or used a weapon during the time-span indicated in the questionnaire. Only 3% indicated that they often used a weapon, whilst 7% admitted that they seldom used or carried weapon.

(18) Appropriate statement

Table 4.18: Appropriate statement distribution

Statement	Agree (frequency and percentage)	Disagree (frequency and percentage)	Total (frequency)
My close friends understand me better than my parents	48 40%	55 46%	103
I feel right now in my life that I learn more from my friends than I do from my parents	29 24%	69 58%	98
I am more “myself” with my close friends than with my parents	49 41%	49 41%	98
If I need advice, I would ask my friends before I ask my parents	45 38%	55 46%	100

The score of 41% of the respondents who were more “themselves” with their close friends is high, as is the 40% who were understood better by their close friends. 38% of the respondents needed advice from their friends rather than from their parents, and 24% learned more from their friends than from their parents.

4.2 Discussion of the Results

In chapter one, it was stated that the purpose of this study was to identify the challenges that teenagers of the 21st century are facing. In this chapter, the empirical research findings were analysed and some of the challenges were identified. The researcher will synthesise the findings, interpret them and identify some gaps for further investigation in the next sections.

The gap analysis arises from the various samples that were distributed amongst the respondents.

4.2.1 Church Attendance

From table 4.5, it is clear that there is a decline in church attendance by adolescents. There is high participation during childhood, but diminished involvement during

adolescence. The departure from the church during adolescence and young adulthood is widely established in many churches.

The overall rate of 73% of the respondents who attended church validates the assumption that youth attendance is declining in churches. Osmer (1996:5) confirms that the high decline of adolescents leaving the church was upheld in the research on Presbyterian confirmants. He maintains that only 6% of those confirmants affiliated with fundamentalist churches as adults, whereas a staggering 48% could be placed in the unchurched category.

Weaver et. al., (1999:19) argues that studies link religious involvement of the youth to many positive social benefits. He maintains that the youth who practise their faith have more pro-social values and caring behaviours than those without religious involvement.

Youth must be viewed as part of the congregation; hence they must be incorporated into the plan and purpose of God for His congregation and, through it, for the world. Nel (2000:64) states that God's purpose with the congregation is also God's purpose with the youth as an essential part of the congregation.

4.2.2 Reasons for Attending Church

The 64% score of teenagers who attend church because of their personal interest is encouraging. However, the concern arises about the other 36% who have various other reasons for attending the church service.

It is amazing that many teenagers, having been exposed to Christianity in their childhood, choose to end their involvement when they become young adults. Perhaps the questions could be directed to youth leaders: Do they try to convert young people, instead of allowing God to convert them? Are they a living message that the youth are reading? Do they love teenagers for who they are? Do they give a life-giving message? Do they read much about teenagers, e.g. in magazines, on the Internet, in journals or books, listen to their music, take them out for tea or ice cream? Do they let them talk while they are listening? Do they try to be informed about the youth?

4.2.3 Youth Service Comments

The 60% of young people who indicated that youth leaders do not address their felt needs reveals a gap analysis in youth service. Perhaps this is one reason why many leave church institutions when they become independent.

Importantly, the 53% rating of young people who indicated that the youth are represented in decision making highlights that the youth service is attempting to serve young people in the church. However, this number should increase if the church expects good, regular church attendance amongst young people in the 21st century.

DeVries (1994:28) argues that if our programmes are training teenagers to be reactive, immature Christians, we can expect those young people eventually to become discouraged by the difficulty and boredom of the Christian life. Could it be that the majority of our efforts in programming and publicity may, in fact, be moving teens away from, rather than toward mature Christian adulthood?

4.2.4 Sex Education

According to table 4.9, it is obvious that the problems facing young people about sex education will remain a challenge unless parents, in particular, do something about the issue.

It is rather shocking that a relatively high score of 17% was given for friends being the source of sex education and a very low score of 3% for the youth pastor. This reveals that friends matter more to the teens than other groups of people. Friends are profoundly loyal to them. Unfortunately, these friendships with the opposite sex can lead to sexual intercourse. Kujawa (1998: 7) confirms that about three-quarters of 18- and 19-year-old girls are sexually active, regardless of their race or their ethnic background, while almost a third of all teenagers have had sexual intercourse.

However, research has consistently shown the constraining effects of religious involvement on premature sexual behaviour among the youth. Lower rates of sexual

intercourse, fewer sexual partners and more negative attitudes toward premarital sexual activity have been found in teens who regularly attend church and believe religion is important in their lives than in those who do not. (Weaver et. al., 1999: 21).

4.2.5 Alcohol Usage, Smoking and Drug Abuse

The usage of alcohol, smoking and drugs appears to be relatively low amongst the respondents. The results of this study are also confirmed by Weaver et al. (1999:20), as they argue that numerous studies over the past three decades substantiate the Gallup Youth Survey results which found that alcohol and drug use decreases among teens who have a religious commitment. These studies have found that high religious involvement is a powerful preventative of social problems among adolescents, including the use of alcohol and other substances. However, the low rate reflected in the tables above reveals that alcohol and other substance usage is somewhat of a challenge amongst youth in the church.

4.2.6 Suicide

With regard to suicide among the youth, the combined 27% rate reflected for “often” and “seldom” should be a cause for concern in the church. Barna (1995:24) argues that suicide is viewed as just one of the many viable choices available to a healthy, functional person. He maintains that many youth view it not as a sign of weakness, but as a rational choice in which the alternatives are less attractive.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter one the purpose of this study was formulated as to analyse and identify the challenges that teenagers are facing in the 21st century. For empirical purposes, the researcher focused on three churches: Crystal Tabernacle Church in Eldorado Park, and Grace Bible Church and Koinonia Bible Church which are both in Sebokeng.

In section 1.6 the problem statement was formulated. The crisis in youth ministry continues in spite of the exponential growth in the amount of money spent on youth ministry and the number of professionals employed to do the youth work. Notable researchers agree that the teens of today are facing a whole new set of choices, expectations, fears and challenges. The actual question regarding the subject was:

- What are challenges that the teens are facing in the new millennium?

A practical theology study was undertaken, which included the research and design methodology described in chapter three. An interview was conducted in the three churches mentioned above, and participants cooperated with four moderators and the researcher. The interviews were transcribed and interpreted. In chapter two an intensive literature review was undertaken regarding the challenges the youth are facing. The research findings in chapter four were verified or not against the hypotheses reflected in section 1.7. In chapter five, the conclusions of the study are drawn and recommendations are made. The conclusions will be discussed in the next section.

5.2 Conclusions

Through this study, the researcher came to the following conclusions:

- The research statement, namely that there are challenges that teens are facing in the 21st century, has been confirmed through the findings of the study.

- The literature review study undertaken in chapter two also confirms the challenges the youth are facing in the 21st century.
- The 120 respondents interviewed from three different churches shared a comprehensive range of perspectives. From these perspectives, the researcher concludes with confidence that, indeed, the youth of today face unavoidable challenges.
- The poor church attendance among the youth, according to the findings, brings the researcher to the conclusion that many churches are ill-prepared to minister to the youth they now have, let alone additional members in the future. As a result of this phenomenon, many young people attend church to please their parents, others leave church sometimes in their teen years and a large number of them never return.
- The congregation constitutes the practice fields of Christianity. Involving youth in the total life of the congregation allows teenagers to experience Christian community in its fullness and to become agents of ministry, not merely objects of ministry.
- Today's teens are facing a complex set of sexual messages and choices before their bodies are even equipped to reproduce themselves. According to the findings, the youth are not acquiring sound teaching on sex education from either their parents or the church.
- The need for adult guarantors in the church is fundamental. These are adults who somehow believe in young people before there is any good reason to do so. The presence and availability of adult guarantors for the teens will encourage and enhance the youth's faith identity, and it will serve as a sign of society's acceptance and appreciation of them and of the gifts they have to offer.
- There is a need for youth workers to find ways to equip parents without basing the success or failure of the youth ministry on those parents' faithfulness.

- One of the greatest hindrances to youth ministry, according to the findings in chapter four, lies in the fact that far too many teenagers view Christianity as just another part of their life. The teenagers are not sufficiently challenged to be involved in religious faith and in growing and vital ways. They are not equipped to face up to the challenges in the world. The researcher concludes that it is the responsibility of church leaders and youth workers to discover what is behind the “mask” of today’s youth and unleash the potential that is within them.
- The objective of this study was to determine the challenges the youth are facing in the 21st century. This objective will not be achieved, however, unless youth leaders and the church understand teenagers and the challenges they are facing as articulated in this study.
- Olford in Ratcliff & Davis (1991: 275) states that “God creates only originals, not carbon copies”. The researcher concludes that the challenges to youth leaders and to all youth practitioners is to uncover “God’s original” in each young person to whom they minister.
- The researcher is of the opinion that the church that fails to understand and minister to young people of today may eventually be forced to close its doors, because the great potential is being wasted which would impact the world positively.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made in view of the above findings and conclusions.

- The church and youth leaders should familiarise themselves with the results of this study, and devise an alternative plan of action.
- They should subscribe to the theological and teleological aspects of the youth ministry as articulated in sections 2.2 to 2.4. Youth ministry should be viewed and understood as part of a comprehensive, inclusive and differentiated ministry of the congregation, with catechesis as a vital component.

- Youth workers should undertake an empirical study research and determine why the youth leave the church during the adolescent stage. As confirmed through this study, young people who disaffiliate with the church do so by the time they have turned 16 years old.
- Youth leaders should investigate the existing gap regarding sex education from parents and the church. According to the findings, the combined 30% who stated that they got their sex education from parents and the church is very little. Further research into this aspect will be of great value to parents, pastors and the youth leaders.
- The church and youth leaders need to investigate the theology of family life (parents). The researcher's view is that parents are primary mediators to the youth. Therefore, research should be undertaken in this regard.
- Regular opportunities should be provided for the youth of the church to build friendships with the pastor and youth leaders to remind them of their connection to the total church and not simply to the youth programme.
- Seminars on divorce recovery, preparing for parenting an adolescent, marriage enrichment, teaching your children Christian values and understanding your teenager can all serve as windows to building faith maturity in the parents of teenagers.

ANNEXURE

Questionnaire

V1 1-3

1. Gender? M F

V2 4

2. Race?

V3 5

3. How old are you?

V6 6-7

4. What grade do you do?
Tick the one which is true for you

Grade 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Grade 9	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Grade 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
Grade 11	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Grade 12	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Post grade 12 studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
Left school	<input type="checkbox"/>	7

V7 8

5. How often did you attend the church service
on Sunday during the last four weeks?
Tick the one which is true for you.

Four times	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Three times	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Two times	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
One time	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

V8 9

6. Why do you attend the church service?
Tick the one which is true for you.

I followed my parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
I am personally interested	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
I wanted to satisfy my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
I heard that my moral and ethic life will improve	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Specify other reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

V9 10

7. What would you say about youth services?
 Tick the one which is true for you.

	Agree	Disagree	
I feel my church does not understand me			1
Youth leaders do not address our felt needs			2
The input in the youth services is more balanced and satisfying			3
Our youth services are empowering to face challenges in the world			4
Youth is represented in decision making of the church			5

V10 11

V11 12

V12 13

V13 14

V14 15

8. Are you dating someone in your life?

Yes	No
-----	----

V15 16

9. Where did you first learn about sex life?
 Tick the one which is true for you:

From my parents at home	1
From my friends	2
From my teachers	3
From my youth pastor	4
From reading the books	5
From television	6
From books and magazines	7

V16 17

10. If you had sexual intercourse, then why?
 Tick the one which is true for you:

I wanted to know how it felt like	1
It provides a thrill	2
I was lonely and felt bored	3
It feels good to do it	4
It is natural thing to do	5
It releases a tension	6
I did not want to be different from my friends	7

V17 18

11. When you were involved in sexual intercourse, did you use contraceptives?

Often	
Seldom	
Never	

V18 19

12. Did you use alcohol three or more times in the past month?

Yes	No
-----	----

V19 20

13. Do you smoke one or more cigarettes every day?

Yes	No
-----	----

V20 21

14. Do you use drugs frequently?

Yes	No
-----	----

V21 22

15. Have you thought of committing suicide in the last past 8 months from January 2004 to August 2004?

Often	
Seldom	
Never	

V22 23

16. Have you engaged in acts of fighting, hitting, injuring another person in the past year from August 2003-August 2004?

Often	
Seldom	
Never	

V23 24

17. Did you carry or used a weapon since August 2003 to August 2004?

Often	
Seldom	
Never	

V24 25

c

Tick the one which is true for you:

	Agree	Disagree	
18. My close friends understand me better than my parents			1
19. I feel right now in my life that I learn more from my friends than I do from my parents			2
20. I'm more "myself" with my close friends than with my parents			3
21. If I need advice, I'd ask my friends before I ask my parents			4

V25 26

V26 27

V27 28

V28 29

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