

Motivational Mindsets - Part 1

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Brian was different to most of the other young people we worked with. Not that he was strange or exhibited abnormal behaviour. It was more that he just didn't fit in. Certainly he didn't naturally fit into the groups we had at the church. He was considered by the other young people to be a bit of a nerd, and as much as they tried, they never quite connected with him.

Brian was into whatever he wanted to be into and didn't much care what others were doing. One day I got hold of an old amp and speaker system. It only worked intermittently but we thought we could do it up and finally have the disco that the young people had been pleading for. Brian came around to the community house where we lived and stayed for 15 hours trying to get the system going. Eventually it worked and Brian became the hero of the young people. He now headed up our primitive technical team - and he came alive. A few others, a bit like Brian, kind of gathered around him planning for new equipment and tinkering with what they had. It became a sub-group of our youth ministry.

All the same?

When I started out in youth ministry, the prevailing view was that all young people were the same. However, I observed that young people did not respond in the same way to the same things. The great mystery was why people responded to different things. As I progressed I remember noticing that people who were 'into' the same sorts of things started hanging out together and did things together as they formed groups and what we thought were cliques. I then started to discover that youth ministry can be based around how young people live naturally rather than around transposing them into a one-for-all programme.

We now live in pluralistic societies. There is no such thing as 'a' youth culture – but youth 'cultures'. Many times in the past we have unknowingly shaped our youth ministries around sub-cultures. I want to suggest that there are many ways we can do effective youth ministry in our emerging contexts if we exegete (interpret or unpack and understand) the context that we and the young people are in. It is rarely helpful to just copy what others are doing, or adopt the latest ideas or the model of a large youth ministry that produces lots of resources on how to do 'their' model.

I have observed 8 distinctive motivational groupings amongst young people around which models of youth ministry can be developed:

- Competitive-motivated
- Why-motivated

- Other-motivated
- Inner-motivated
- Multi-stimulated-motivated
- Trend-motivated
- Social Outcasts-motivated
- Survival-motivated

I will look at four of these in this article and four in the next article.

Competitive-Motivated Young People I was working with a Korean Church in Sydney Australia. The Church had asked if I would create an English speaking worship service for 16-24 year olds, and do some leadership training with leaders and potential leaders. I planned out interactive sessions with discussions and exercises. It was hard work. On the fourth week I inadvertently included a game to play. Suddenly the place came alive! They were into it! Enthusiasm bubbled over and as you can guess, for the rest of the sessions I included games, competitions, races and tournaments. Something inside of me balked at this, for my natural way of operating was to work through cooperative process learning. But competition motivated them, and helped them to discover leadership skills naturally.

Competitive-motivated people get energy from competing. They thrive on the challenge of the contest and sometimes the possibility of winning. If there is a chance to *have a go* at something that will involve *going up against* others, then they have the motivation to get involved.

Competitive-motivated young people are often into sports. Here is a great opening to effective ministry and mission through church sporting teams and competitions. Chaplaincy to sports teams is an increasing ministry through school and community based sports teams. I know of one colleague who coached a basketball team of young men, and through contacts with them and their parents brought six families into the church in one season.

Another congregation that I was doing a consultation with decided that on the new block of land that they had bought the first thing they would erect was not a church building but a basketball court. The town was under resourced for basketball venues for male and female competitions. To the players, it became our church with *our courts*.

Sporting camps and events also become entry points to build community, develop relationships and avenues through which to practise the presence of Jesus. At camps where sporting skills are taught and the themes to bible studies or spiritual spots are oriented to sporting images offer a great entry point into the development of understandings and experiences of faith. Life values can be introduced as they challenged to explore what it means to be team and how do we value and include others. Faith is developed with giving the challenges of the gospel and the commitment to follow Jesus.

Leadership of competitive-motivated young people works best through people who were themselves competitive-motivated. Building a team approach to leadership, with energy channelled into tasks and pastoral care teams will bring out the best in these young people. Leaders are the coaches and the carers of the team.

Why-Motivated I remember two kids in my year at school who would hang around the library, and do intricate work in technical studies. They were into classical music and obscure bands. We all thought they

were nerds. These are young people who are motivated by intellectual pursuit, who thrill at and thrive on, the discovery of new ideas and information: the why.

A newer inclusion in this group are the computer freaks. Not those who just enjoy playing games but those who enjoy computer programming and talk to each other in networks on the Internet. These young people thrive on new information and applying their discoveries to anything they can within their world. Observing some of these groups in the school, computer fairs or in shops, I have discovered they tend to focus their energy on projects and ideas rather than on fashion and relational skills. They will relate through the equipment or project they are working on.

There is a youth ministry particularly focused on this group through doing scientific projects. The young people choose kits to build and small projects to work on. They do this in small groups or as individuals. The leaders are technicians, scientists, engineers and science teachers. They work with the young people to help them to discover and build their projects during which time they pastor, teach and nurture. The youth group is the only one I know of with a waiting list of over 100.

I have seen other churches start computer clubs, groups, camps or holiday programs and base a very effective youth ministry around it. They explore new programs, test ideas and share discoveries. Again through the computer, faith is shared, young people are nurtured and relationships are built. One church simply asked a bunch of individuals who were why-motivated to cooperate on putting together the church's webpage. They only ever met in cyberspace but they suddenly belonged and became a group and delivered a fantastic webpage.

Other churches have started study nights in church halls or a number some appropriate school venue. There are a number of young people, particularly in the final years of high school, who do not have adequate space and facilities at home to study. Teachers, people with qualifications to help in the different study areas or just people who have a heart for young people to be an ear to listen, have been invaluable.

Other-Motivated Other-motivated young people are attracted to other people. They are oriented to being with others, in many cases they are extroverts. If there is a group happening they will want to be a part of it. Sometimes what is happening is not as important as the fact that a group is 'just happening'. These young people often do well in youth groups because they find the social dynamic, attractive and enticing.

To attract and hold other-motivated young people it is important to pay close attention to the maintenance functions of the group. These young people enjoy a healthy group life with strong interpersonal dynamics. It is the community and inter-relationships that motivate them to belong and enter into the life and purpose of the group.

I know of a youth ministry which recently had a week long work camp with some older members of the congregation. Travelling to the project, working together sharing the fun, and night-time biblical reflections and studies, grew the youth group, congregation (and the ministry team) into a momentous community. This had effects on the worship and missional life of the whole congregation. It was one of the ultimate experiences for the other-motivated young people and their families.

Big events are yearned for! Although not exclusive to this motivational group, big events are attractive and important to them. Large events where there are chances to be a part of a crowd of young Christians can be a spiritual shot in the arm to these people. This is not new. William James wrote nearly a century ago in *Varieties of Religious Experience* that some personalities are less capable than others of believing in an invisible God. Faith may be more easily discovered, he says, by 'collective effervescence' rather than in isolation. The once a week youth group does not necessarily help them to grow their discipleship. These

young people are used to massive amounts of stimulation and significant social surprises will enhance an effective ministry with them. Consider having specials every two to three months. Be careful not to discount these experiences as invalid, emotional highs – they are important steps in faith development.

In large denominational youth gatherings I have observed the particular excitement of other-motivated young people from small youth groups and congregations. The gatherings are almost a vision of the invisible church for them. Many go back to their home churches with renewed confidence that they are part of a bigger movement and group.

Pastoral care with these people is often experienced best in cell groups where they can be honest and encouraging, and share things with each other. Peer counselling and care are important skills to teach these young people.

Leadership among other-motivated people is naturally shared, with a strong need for the experience of being a team. People with the gifts and competencies to build community keep the groups alive and to organise safe socialising settings will go well with this group. The way that things are organised is also important. Giving entry points for group members to be involved, and having fun and community amongst the leadership team can spill out into the group creating a lively and enticing atmosphere for other-motivated people to want to be a part of.

Inner-Motivated

Inner-motivated young people are self-directed people. They can be solitary or find others who are similarly motivated and form groups of individuals. These people have tastes in clothing, music and hobbies that are based on what they like rather on fashion and acceptability. They are often the quiet achiever, they just get on with their study, their interests – sometimes their mission. They are people who work from the inside out and don't always need to tell people about it – they just do it.

These young people are most often future oriented. They are people who ponder on issues and what is happening around them, then make the decision on where they will go. They are willing to go through hardships and struggles to eventually get what they are looking for.

They can be high achievers, as they have an ability to focus on outcomes and not crave for acceptance and popularity. Some of these people can be cynical and critical, particularly of others who they see as the frivolous 'party animals'.

This group forms community around tasks, rather than on group maintenance. In fact youth groups are not as important to this motivational grouping. I was doing a consultancy with one congregation that had a number of these young people and they came to structure their youth ministry around holiday time and four to six week projects. The Bible studies, activities and group life was oriented around the current project.

Pastoral care of these people is best done on a one to one basis. Through mentoring they can feel a connection with is often helpful. Many of these can be private people and see the sharing of problems and struggles as a difficulty. Strong attention to individual needs, hurts and hopes can therefore be critical to effective pastoral care. Many of these people have deep longings for intimacy and community and can develop lifelong friendships when this occurs.

Discipleship amongst these people can often be effectively achieved by self-directed learning and spiritual retreats. One of my colleagues has run retreats for this group where they take just a bible with them into the Australian Bush for a whole day and even overnight. They then gather and share what they have discovered. He says that the insights and experiences of God are astounding.

Leadership amongst Inner-motivated people is naturally shared with a strong need for individuality and to allow other to be individuals. Space for individual expression and facilitation of these is a characteristic of a helpful leadership style. Strong leadership with individuals given individual tasks to help achieve the overall goal can be a satisfying style to this motivational group.

In a future article, Fuzz looks at reaching the final four groups: Multi-stimulated-motivated, trend-motivated, Social Outcasts-motivated and survival-motivated.

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