

Motivational Mindsets - Part 2

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People live out of their motivations. Young people do it more so. Generally they are less likely to have been socialised into behavioural patterns and acceptable boundaries so they naturally gravitate to those things that naturally motivate them. They are not all the same.

I was doing a consultation in the USA. The church had asked me to help them find ways forward for their ministry with young people, so that they might connect with young people in their community. They were running a number of social and Bible Study groups and only connecting with a small number of young people. They had a great music minister at the church that loved young people. The local school had also just closed down the music department, which disappointed many young people and their families. It was also a town that attracted many people from farms around the area who retired and moved into the town. Many of these had long years of experience as musicians and music lovers.

I discovered that they could put these two groups together and they started a music school at the church for young people who were tutored by the retired people. Taking the motivations of the young people, and matching up the leadership in the church and community nurtured a youth ministry which both enjoyed.

In the last article we looked at Competitive, Why, Other and Inner motivated young people. This time, we look at Trendies, Multi-stimulated, Outcasts and Survivors.

Trend-Motivated

Craze, Fad and Fashion young people are the trendies. They generally enjoy new programmes (unless the old ones are coming back in again!), the latest songs, the latest songwriters and the latest speakers. They also act *cool*, turning their noses up at anything that does not seem to be acceptable or *in* to them. They will be into evangelism when it suits them, justice when it is trendy and worship when it looks like there is a crowd. Ask any school teacher and they will tell you what the latest trend is, and who is in that group, whether it is green hair, Doc Martin Boots or yo-yos. This group has got to be helped to not judge people on the outside and to not only accept people who are like them.

To attract and hold this motivational group you almost need to develop a trend or use the latest trend as an entry point and be ready to move onto the next. Relationships are still important with this group and once established a significant adult can be a key reference point, almost a still point in their rapidly changing world. Some of them enjoy being able to shock, show off to or to intrigue an adult that they have a special relationship with. Others need someone who can see behind the outer *show* and get to the real person.

Pastoral care is of great significance when ministering this group. There are some in this group that are trying to be noticed and others trying to prove themselves, while others just enjoy being into the new and latest. Discerning the reason for their motivation will of course determine the pastoral care needed whether it is encouragement, a listening ear or healing.

Leadership with this group needs to be dynamic and aware. It also needs to be patient and discerning helping the young people to reflect on trends and fads while building a strong sense of community.

Discipleship needs to be based on relevant Bible studies, theological reflection and relationships, which are keys to growing an awareness of faith through their view of the world. This however, is one of the most difficult groups to do this with. Deep experiences of God seem to be the most effective.

Multi-stimulated Motivated Multi-stimulated young people have many interests, involvements and stimulations. They enjoy involvement in a whole variety of activities and enjoy being with others who are similarly stimulated. We often do well with these people in many of our churches. These young people will not just play sport but may play a couple of sports and play a musical instrument or two and go to dance classes and have a hobby and go to church. They are 'and' people.

One of the dangers with this group is pushing their commitment - to try and make church the priority in their busy lives. They will be involved with many activities and a common fallacy is to try and make them come to the youth ministry and fit around it. Helpful youth ministries will structure their programmes around young people. This might mean holding Bible studies over breakfast, running youth groups other than Friday night or Sunday morning, and even running modules, events and camps between sporting seasons.

What these young people need help focussing on is not so much commitment but compassion. These young people are motivated by compassion, and it is more helpful to work on what they are good at. By growing their compassion they can effectively focus on the many people and groups they are involved with. This gives them great opportunities for faith sharing and effective mission.

Multi-stimulated young people are often multi-talented, so build on their diverse gifts and friendship networks by providing for them significant and meaningful things to do and experience. Most of these people are crying out for significant ways to use their talents and gifts but are put off by insignificant activities and events. It can be important to help them focus their time on those things that will bring satisfaction and fulfilment. Help them with decision-making skills, because they will always be looking at some new activity or event.

Consequently, discipleship is also best developed through significant things to do in mission, evangelism, justice and worship. This might range from local to overseas, from in-depth Bible studies in varying styles to specific concrete projects. Worship is also important with this group particularly when there is participation, variety and life.

Often these people are, or potentially are, key leaders. Leadership formation, courses and apprenticing are therefore major things to focus on. Mentors are also helpful for this group particularly if they were also Multi-stimulated motivated when they were young. So if you have these young people in your church or community, reach out to them, hang on to them and nurture them. They might just be a world changer through compassion and their ability to build community.

Multi-stimulated young people are attracted to youth groups because they are another stimulation and plain of experience. A key to working effectively with them is often their parents. Building effective networking

among their parents can not only help keep them in the church but offer a great field of evangelism with the whole family. If you can provide the relational glue and support that sticks the parents of these young people to the church through a significant relational network, you will have stuck the young people to their faith and discipleship. Churches need to work harder at this because community groups often do much better at it with helpful results.

Social-Outcast Motivated

In any town, city and school there will be those who are motivated to be on the edge. These are the social outcasts. They have not necessarily been forced by others to the peripheries of society, but in fact may have chosen to be there. This motivational group actually enjoys being *out of it*. Often reacting against what they see as the values, traditions and norms held by the mainstream, they try and develop alternative expressions, dress, music and language. It is a form of tribalism.

An identifiable bunch in this grouping is the *metal heads*. For those not aware of this term, they are very easy to identify. They are into heavy metal music, most often wear black clothing with their favourite heavy metal bands on the front and/or back, and wear long hair sometimes with the sides cut short or even shaved. There are a number of variations, but each stand out as being different. They enjoy being on the edge and being different from the straights (those who are easily accepted by mainstream society).

To effectively mission and minister to this group it is important to perceive and discover what it is that they are responding or reacting to. Is it hurt of rejection, or hope of having an identity through being different? Some are working out of their hurts. One ethnic based gang in western Sydney are called the 5T's. These 5T's are suggested to be initials of the Vietnamese words 'Tuoi, Tre, Thieu, Tinh, Thuong', which mean 'young people lack love and care'. The gang is believed to be involved in numerous criminal activities. It is not difficult to figure out why they are reacting as they are.

Some of these young people are looking for an identity that evidences itself in the dress, behaviour and style through which they choose to search. Some are trying out different characters and others are looking for feedback and reactions that can each be a part of the external naming process by others rather than an inward discovery of who they are.

One of the key inroads into this group is the incarnational approach. Go to where they are at and work through their subculture. The entry points for the gospel that exist are personal and cultural. When we were running a long four month mission with young people in Adelaide we would always have a large group hanging around the outside of a venue where we were holding key events. We started out by trying numerous ways to entice and encourage them to come inside. It rarely worked. These people enjoyed being out on the edge. We had to realise that this was an identifiable group who needed us to go to them, rather than have them come to us. We decided to develop an outside team. This team just hung around outside, with them. They had a ministry just as authentic as that of the inside team.

Evangelism with this group needs to be direct, gutsy and authentic in understanding their worldview. Discipleship formation also needs to be realistic and meaningful, offering significant experiences and Bible studies which are practical and well contextualised. Any attempt to make these people fit in to mainstream society through evangelism or discipling is destined for disaster and mistrust.

When the Spirit of the Living of God touches these young people's lives, amazing things can happen. The temptation of the mainstream church is then to try and domesticate them and transform them into good middle class people. If you have adults in your congregation who were in this motivational group as young people, they will make excellent youth leaders. They understand how they think, feel and why they enjoy doing the activities that motivate them. Encourage them to use the experiences of their youth in the mission of God, with the compassion of Christ. These kids need lots of love and focussed attention.

Survival-Motivated The survival-motivated grouping is one we have noticed coming to the forefront in recent years. This is a group that is motivated to find the basic physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs crucial to surviving to the next day. This is not a natural motivational grouping; circumstances, pressures or illness have overridden their natural motivations. The rise of this group in our society is an indicator of ways in which our society as a whole is failing young people.

Those who have been or are being badly abused fit into this grouping. Finding the emotional strength to make it through the day or the night becomes a key goal for them. Those with mental illnesses and eating disorders (which have increased five-fold in the last 30 years) are part of this group. Their struggle is to find the motivation to survive. Those who are homeless are motivated to find the next meal or the next place to stay. Those who are suicidal struggle to find the motivation to find the hope needed to stay alive.

Understandably the people in this motivational grouping need personalised ministry depending on their situation and relationships with those around them. Some youth ministries have effectively concentrated on people in this motivational group or are able to include some of these people in their ministry and some of their programmes. While working in Tasmania we ran a camping programme in which up to 30% of the participants were survival motivated young people referred through government welfare agencies. We were able to create an experience of Christian community for and with these young people and a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. 'We don't know what you do to these young people,' the staff of the welfare agencies often commented, 'but they come back different people.'

There are many kinds of people who can be helpful in ministry with these young people. People who have been through it themselves, have had children go through it, or who have a particular passion and calling to work with these young people, will be helpful. In some instances, you may want or need to draw on professionals with skills in the area - either from the wider church or the community, if they are not present in your own congregation. Just don't ever treat these young people like 'cases' or clients!

Finding ways of involving these young people in a youth ministry can also have an amazing and transforming effect on other young people. Instead of our fears of them being a bad influence coming to reality, the effects can be positive. If one or a few of these young people start to hang around your church, consider them angels in disguise sent by God.

John Maxwell once said: 'People don't care how much you know - till they know how much you care.' This is certainly true of these motivational groups. Young people yearn for community and a belonging where they can find a sense of home.

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