

Brett Clemmer: The Myth of Adolescence

Recently, I wrote about some insights from the Christian Service Brigade 75th Anniversary celebration. One of the key speakers was Chuck Stecker of A Chosen Generation. Chuck shared some comments that I would like to pass on about the whole idea of “adolescence.”

Chuck writes:

“The word adolescent(s) was invented in the U.S. in about 1904 and it defines this alleged period of time where the young person is no longer a child but not yet an adult. G. Stanley Hall, the inventor of the word, defined it as a time of turbulence and confusion like a ship being tossed on a stormy sea. He was a “Darwin Disciple” and believed in evolution and as such believed and taught that during this time nothing could be done to alter this period.

Key here is that when we use the word Adolescent we take away responsibility for the person’s actions.”

Chuck’s point resonates. I see young men all around me who may be victims of this mindset. They’re 25, in a dead-end job, living at home, playing video games and, alarmingly, relatively content. Of course, this is a generalization, but the ramifications of this thinking are starting to manifest. Chuck continues:

“We must also realize that to do away with adolescence is to attack a multi-million dollar industry. To the point that many of the same proponents of adolescence having been working hard to have a new season of life written into the medical books called ‘Emerging Adulthood.’ This season would go until about

29 years of age. And at 30 a person could be a real adult.”

A “real adult” at 30? That’s just foolish. So what are we to do? What if the church rejected the whole idea of adolescence? There is no time of lack of responsibility. You don’t go from boy to adolescent to emerging adult to man. You go from boy to young man, to a man with a career and perhaps a wife and children, and beyond. What would this look like?

Chuck is a champion for “inter-generational” ministry. This means ministry that includes all ages of men—from 12 to 112—when possible and appropriate. Let’s stop treating teen-aged young men like they have no responsibilities. Let’s stop trying to entertain them. Let’s bring them into our manhood activities as a training ground for them as they mature.

Imagine what your church would look like if every teen-aged young man had a personal relationship with godly older men in their 20s, 30s, 40s and beyond. Not as a “volunteer youth staff,” but as a friend, mentor and older brother in the faith.

Becky Hunter and her husband, Pastor Joel Hunter, raised three godly and successful sons. She said something when my son was very young that became one of my fathering tenets. “I’m not trying to raise boys, I’m trying to raise men.” Amen.

I encourage you to check out A Chosen Generation’s website and explore with the men in your church the idea of bringing the younger men into intentional fellowship and discipleship.

Brett Clemmer is a Christ-follower, husband, father, rock climber, runner and avid reader. He lives in Central Florida and works for Man in the Mirror. In his role as Vice President of Leadership Development, Brett spends the majority of his time writing, training and equipping church leaders to disciple men. Brett co-authored *No Man Left Behind*, a guidebook for church leaders who want to build male disciples in their church. He is active on Facebook and Twitter, and

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