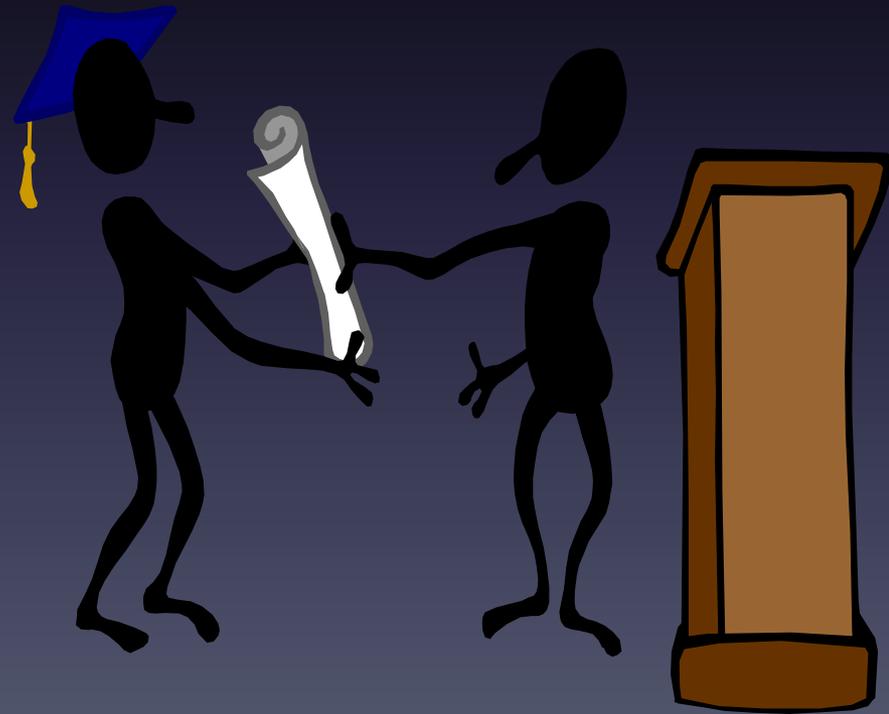


# Millennials: Listening to their Questions, Dreams and Faith

- Chris Kiesling, Ph.D.
- Fall 2016



As you arrive, jot down your response to the following questions:

- How did you know, or when do you think you will know, that you have become an adult?
- Was adulthood conferred upon you by someone else or did you come to this internally?
- Who should assume responsibility for the shaping of young adult identities?
- Are there gender differences in the journey?

# Significant milestones in the journey to adulthood

- Leaving home
- Completing education
- Getting married
- Entering the labor force (sufficient wage to provide for marriage and a family)
- Becoming a parent

**1960**

**2000**

Two-thirds of adults had  
attained all five  
markers by age 25

Less than half of all  
females

Less than one third of all  
males

# Changes occurring in these milestones

- Leaving Home
  - 40% return home after college, “less a one-way street and more like a circular migration”
- Finishing school
  - Since 1960, rise in those attending college from 38% to 70% (postpone financial stability)
- Landing a job
  - b/w 18 and 30, EA's on avg. 7-8 different jobs
- Getting married
  - Avg. age increasing, love and sex prior to marriage
- Having children
  - 40% of children spend time in cohabiting household

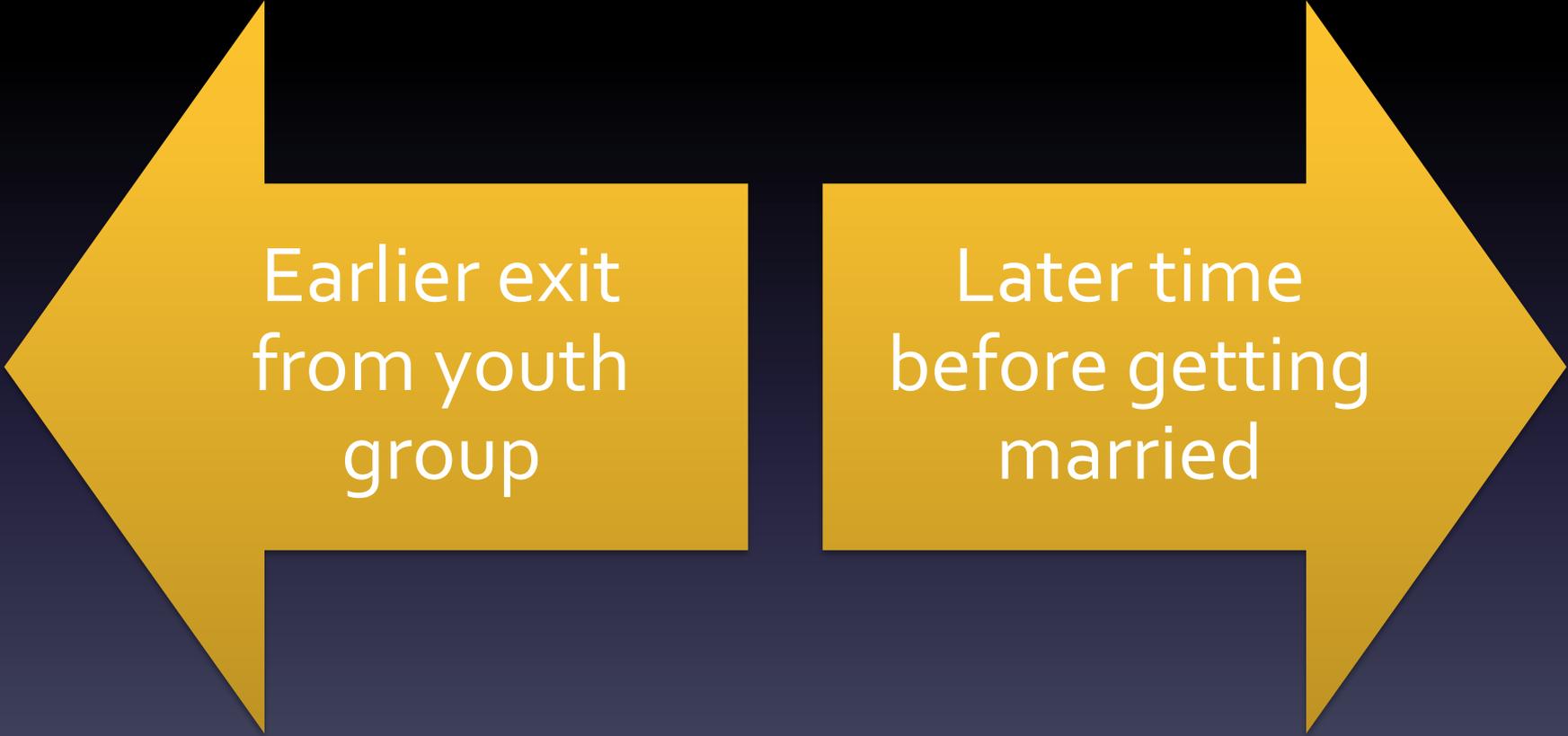
# Jeffrey Arnett

- Sociological markers were not most important criteria in student's sense of becoming adult; rather, they named psychological criteria such as:
  - Accepting responsibility for actions
  - Making independent decisions
  - Becoming financially independent

(Arnett notes that all of these are gradual and unlike rites of passage or sociological markers do not occur all at once)



# Drivers license to marriage license hiatus



Earlier exit  
from youth  
group

Later time  
before getting  
married

# What is happening to faith during this period?

- "*Least religious stage in the life course*" –

Christian Smith

- Declines in:
  - Religious belief
  - Religious behavior
  - Personal and  
subjective sense of feeling  
close to God



# Identity Lockbox – Tim Clydesdale



# Some hopeful signs?

- HERI report – 4 out of 5 report a very high level of spiritual interest and desire to spend ample time exploring the “meaning and purpose of life”
- Increasingly comfortable interacting with other cultures, traditions
- Renewed interests to connect with historic traditions
- Eagerness to bring redemptive power of gospel to bear on social and personal issues
- Longing for mentors – theology of accompaniment

# Sources of Disengagement

- Personally – distractions, entertainment options, maintaining of social networks
- Culturally – meaning of this phase in life course, instability, purpose of education
- Theologically/Ecclesiologically

# Can the culture of church relate to the culture of emerging adults?

- **Religious Faith**

- Settled lives
- Other worldly
- Family oriented
- Commitment and investment
- Particularity and exclusivity
- Felt need for faith
- Abstain

- **Young adulthood**

- Transition and disruption
- This worldly
- Break with family
- Options open
- Diversity and Inclusivity
- Self-sufficiency
- Partying/Sex

# Critical question

What type of faith is being embraced and does it have any connection to an ongoing process of spiritual formation?

# Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

- A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other as taught by the Bible and most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- God is not involved in life except when I need God to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

# Consequentially

- Moral intuitionists – produces little movement toward further spiritual formation
- Faith becomes redefined as instrumental; therapeutic mechanism toward personal happiness
- If God absent landlord, faith becomes a personal process of self-improvement

# Moving beyond MTD

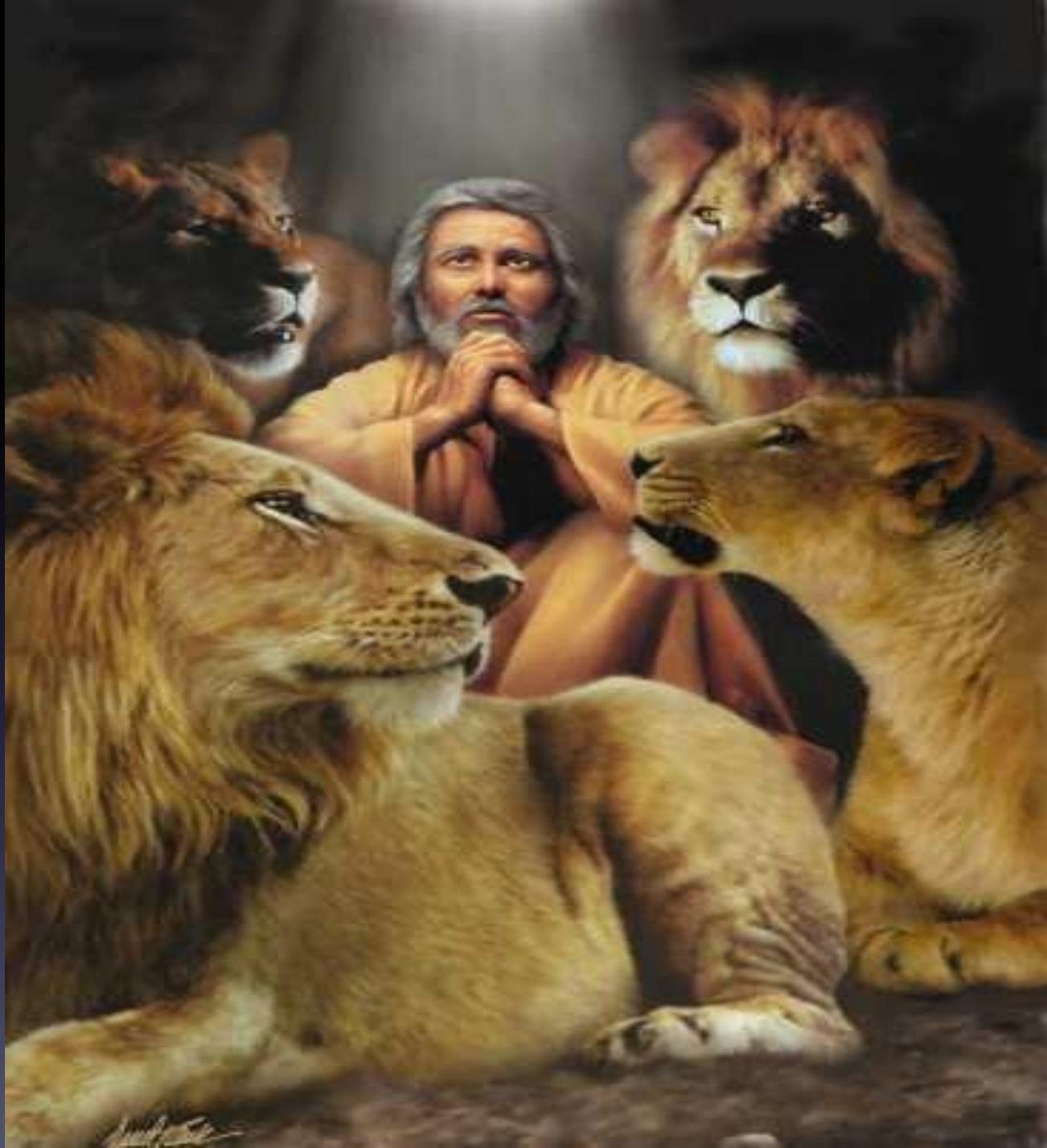
- Beyond moralism to shaping the heart and its desires
- Beyond therapeutic to costly discipleship
- Beyond deism to practicing the presence of God

# Practices of refusal/abstinence

- Solitude
- Fasting
- Silence
- Frugality
- Chastity
- Secrecy
- Sacrifice

# Practices of engagement

- Studying the story of Scripture
- Worship/Celebration
- Prayer
- Fellowship
- Religious singing
- Confession
- Submission
- Works of mercy and justice

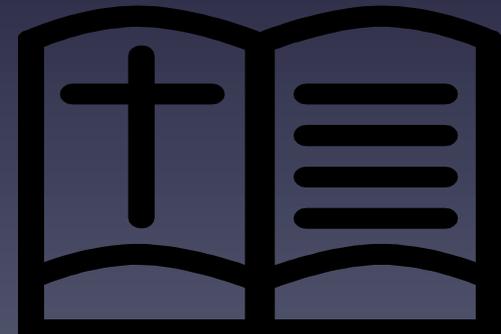


# An appreciative ecclesiology

- *<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. ACTS 2:42-47*

# Teaching – (didache)

- From Xn self-ed project to whole counsel
- Saves us from distortions of God's character
- Creeds tether us against the winds of change
- One generation commends works to another
- Engage EA's in conversations
- across history



# Fellowship – (koinonia)

- Takes EA's out of generational homogeneity
- Xn life not based on affinity, but love of neighbor
- Personal identity not via achievement but communally bestowed
- Exposure to life trajectories of faithfulness
- Inculcates ecclesial ideals – hospitality, stewardship
- Small groups subvert cultural elevation of tolerance

# Worship – (liturgia)

- From image based-entertainment to transcendent worship
- Confronts pathology of identity achievement
- Church year shifts perspective on time
- Reframes moral code in narrative
- Sacraments contra individualism and consumerism

# Mission – (diakonia)

- Moves from myopic focus on personal growth
- Shifts the meaning of adulthood back toward “action oriented love of neighbor”
- Find spiritual purposes inherent in work
- Ecclesio-centric to Theo-centric, missio dei

# Mentoring

- “The mentoring gap is one of most significant factors blunting spiritual formation among EA”
- TOUR GUIDE

# Postures in the mentoring process

- Remembering
- Attentiveness
- Envisioning

“Gift of mentoring is that it turns mere chronology into sacred story.” — Anderson and Reese