

# **Conversion in Adolescents**

## **Dimension of Conversion:**

Physical

Relational

Intellectual

Moral

Religious

## **Hunger in early adolescence**

An idealized body

Popularity, especially with in-groups

Reliable answers; need to be "right" in the eyes of others

Clear guidelines on what is right and wrong

The security of religious meaning, symbol systems and ritual

Tom Zanzig

## **If Converted older teens Hunger for...**

Acceptance of the body they have

A broader range of relationships; desire a diversity of friends

Intellectual freedom and the pursuit of truth

Moral freedom and personal responsibility

Deeper personal faith & religious experiences

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## **Search for in early adolescence**

A naive perfection of body

Popularity, at times with risky behavior

Answers that satisfy and impress others

Moral certainty

Sense of belonging with peers in faith community

## **If Converted older teens Search for...**

A healthy lifestyle

Deeper and life-giving relationships

Answers that satisfy self; can enjoy the search

Moral integrity and guidance

Personal spiritual and theological understanding; communal support for same

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## **Awaken in early adolescence**

The fact that their body is what it is, and a given

The importance of healthy relationships

The reality that some questions lack adequate answers

The recognition that they are capable of doing evil; judgmental of others

The fact that God and institutional religion are not the same

## **If Converted older teens Awaken to...**

The realization that their body is good and sacred

Both the demands and rewards of intimate relationships

The need to embrace Mystery at the center of life; truth as multifaceted

The recognition that they are capable of and called to moral heroism and forgiveness of others

The conviction that God is real and in relationship with them; church as community of sinners

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## **Respond in early adolescence**

Growing in respect for the wonder of their body

Showing an increasing capacity for compassion

Seeking deeper knowledge of self, others, and God

Recognizing personal moral responsibility and identifying faults in others

Exploring what it means to have a personal relationship with God

## **If Converted older teens Respond by...**

Accepting their body and committing to its care

Engaging in relationships with empathy and healthy intimacy

Attracted to a life of intellectual integrity

Accepting self and others as sinful; choosing freely to live by core values & principles

Seeking ways to grow in faith and religious practice