

EXCLUSIVE SURVEY RESULTS

» church is not a relevant place where we can talk about the real world in critical and biblical ways.

Giving Our Kids the Critical Tools They Need

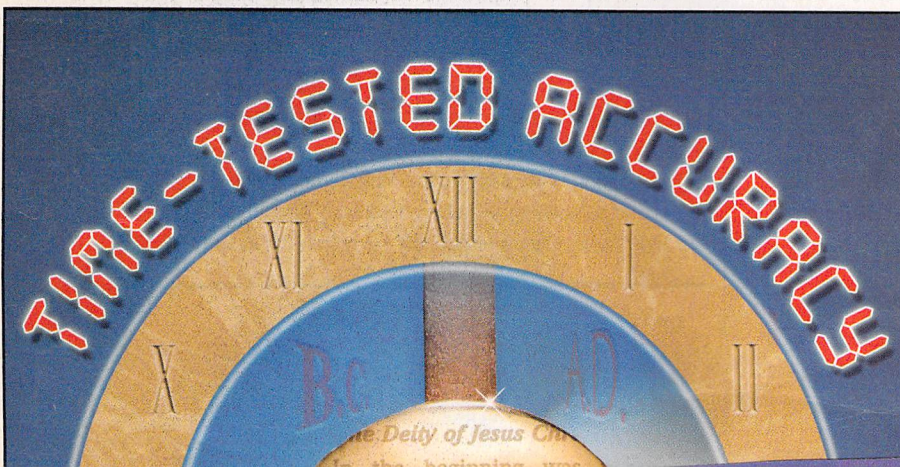
We need tools that will build biblical bridges from kids' cultural influences to God's truths. That's Jesus-style relevancy.

1. Use cultural resources as ministry tools. Jesus was a subversive—he used the stuff of his surrounding culture to

teach his followers about God, confounding his critics as he did. That's exactly why two years ago our **group** team created our online resource MinistryandMedia.com and a companion regular article of the same name in every issue (check it out on page 24). Both the Web site and the **group** articles offer background, critique, and biblical discussion questions for feature films, video clips, popular songs (both mainstream and Christian), and breaking news. Our site has more than 1,300 searchable, topically organized discussion starters based on familiar cultural influences. Go to www.ministryandmedia.com for a free tour of the site.

2. Talk often about their media influences.

Our survey found that just 17 percent of Christian teenagers say their participation in a church youth group has helped them "a lot" to think critically about films or videos (the numbers are 18 percent for non-Christian music, 12 percent for TV shows,



» Non-Christian music

a lot	17.5%
some	33.2%
a little.....	31.0%
not at all	14.3%
not applicable to me.....	3.9%



popular church response to a threatening culture is to raise imaginary walls in hopes of keeping the bad stuff out. That's why we've created Christian versions of...everything. But that's like building a corral under the surface of the sea. It looks like a corral, but it doesn't really keep anything out—or in, for that matter. Adults who want to retreat and fortify are acting out of fear. Our real goal should be to act out of security, with strategies that are ultimately shrewd.

3. Attack, Attack, Attack—When all else fails, the church attacks what is threatening to it. Call this the Dr. Phil paradox—when you attack and try to destroy the cultural forces that kids use as mirrors, you guarantee a break in communication with them. Our real goal should be to maintain communication *so that* we can train them to think critically and biblically about their culture.

How Was Jesus Culturally Relevant?

Do we have real answers for kids, parents, and people in our congregations regarding pop culture? Most often, the answer is no. But we have a God-given and Christ-modeled responsibility to connect faith to real life.

When I talk about this in parent or youth leader workshops,

FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF TEENAGERS, GOD IS IRRELEVANT TO THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES.

I ask people to form trios and pick one of five examples¹ where Jesus engaged his culture in some way. Then I ask them to come up with a “now equivalent” for their chosen example. I mean they must brainstorm what Jesus would have done in our current culture that’s similar to what he did in ancient Jewish culture.

For example, often those who choose the example of Jesus allowing a known prostitute to wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair come up with a current-day scenario of Jesus inviting an avowed homosexual to go to a Sunday school class with him. After trios have a chance to report on what they come up with, I ask them if they think their current-day equivalents would be offensive to most people in their churches. The answer is always an overwhelming yes! In the silence that follows, most people begin to realize that Jesus was far more engaged in the world than we are in the church.

The sobering upshot is that the dichotomous lives we’re living—our real-world selves and our church selves—have “trickled down” into our kids’ lives. We’ve effectively communicated to them that >>>

-
- 1** The examples of Jesus engaging his culture include: 1. Jesus picking wheat on the Sabbath. 2. Jesus overturning the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple. 3. Jesus allowing a known prostitute to crash his party and wash his feet with her tears and hair. 4. Jesus telling people to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s. 5. Jesus turning water into wine at the Cana wedding.