HEMORRHAGING FAITH



WHY & WHEN CANADIAN YOUNG ADULTS ARE LEAVING, STAYING & RETURNING TO THE CHURCH

BY JAMES PENNER, RACHAEL HARDER, ERIKA ANDERSON, BRUNO DÉSORCY, AND RICK HIEMSTRA

A FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH DOCUMENT COMMISSIONED BY THE EFC YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY ROUNDTABLE

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Hemorrhaging Faith:
Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church

By James Penner, Rachael Harder, Erika Anderson, Bruno Désorcy and Rick Hiemstra

Foundational Research Document

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The EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable

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FOREWORD

On behalf of the EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable, I want to say how grateful we are to James Penner and his colleagues for the glimpse behind the curtain that this very important research provides as to why Canadian young people are leaving the church while others are staying.

The members of the Roundtable – composed of youth ministry leaders at denominational, congregational and ministry organization levels – first envisioned a research project focusing on youth and young adults in relation to the church when meeting together in January 2010. We agreed that we needed to hear the voices of those young people much more clearly if we were to understand the challenges that they were facing in terms of their faith and how we might address them within the Canadian context.

The outcome of this vision is found within the pages of the poignantly entitled "Hemorrhaging Faith" research. The findings will confirm some of what you as the reader will likely already know anecdotally: many who have grown up in church are no longer engaged in that context by the time they reach their adult years. More specifically, the transitions from children's ministry to junior high ministry to senior high ministry to the diverse trajectories of young adulthood (e.g., university, travel, work, marriage) are very obvious exit points when members of the younger generation end up leaving the local church. One can't help but conclude that we must be far more proactive in finding out the reasons why and what we can do about it, and to make this quest a very high priority in the life of the church.

I hope too that you will be encouraged by the research findings. While there is no question that young people are leaving the institutionalized church in significant numbers, it does not mean that that they have all written off the church or a faith in Jesus Christ. A good number of them still identify with Christianity. So it is incumbent upon church leadership to work hard at moving these committed students from a faith based on what their parents believe to one that is more mature and has deeper roots.

However, for the larger number of youth who no longer are involved in church, this research leads us to ask how we can move the church to be more youth-friendly, more welcoming of their faith journey, and more willing to engage in an authentic dialogue about faith and life issues, a dialogue that in many ways will require us in church leadership to understand a mindset quite different from our own. If we are to take young adults seriously, there will be a price to pay.

When it comes to reading this report, here's how to follow the flow of what James and his colleagues have done:

- PART I begins with an insightful literature review of the complex social world that youth must navigate as they make their personal faith decisions.
- PART II focuses on young adult faith findings based on church attendance and affiliation shifts since childhood. Four spiritual types are introduced in increasing order of young adults' present distance from church and faith: Engagers, Fence Sitters, Wanderers and Rejecters.
- PART III presents findings on why young adults remain with or leave the church. In their own words, Canadian 18- to 34-year-olds tell us how their experiences of parents, God, community and teaching are crucial to their present spiritual dispositions.
- PART IV highlights the key survey data that correlates to young adults' church attendance. Comparative findings are offered by, among other things, spiritual type and religious affiliation in childhood.
- PART V then turns our attention toward the implications discerned by a national think tank of youth practitioners and church leaders who reflected carefully on the research findings and proposed some possible strategies and responses.
- Lastly, readers are invited to reflect with God and each other on what this research means within their own personal, congregational and ministry organization context.

More than ever before, we must take the faith questions and journey of children through young adults

very, very seriously or experience the consequences that these research findings have clearly set forth.

In the words of a Rachael, a young adult researcher involved in this project, "Young people are searching for a life-giving way of doing church." All of us who have been associated in one way or another with this important piece of Canadian research would passionately challenge you to the core of your being to do whatever it might take to help younger generations discover that life-giving way.

John H. Wilkinson, Chair
The EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable

Hemorrhaging: abnormal, copious loss of a valuable substance

Faith: being sure of what is hoped for and certain of what is not seen. Hebrews 11:1

PREFACE

The strangely ageless-looking patient looks around anxiously as the pallet she lies on starts to glide gently into the imaging tube. "Is this going to hurt?"
The tech reassures her, "No, dear, this part is quite painless. We just need you to stay still, though, so we can get a good reading."
Ever since the specialist diagnosed internal bleeding and requisitioned a battery of tests, the patient has been dreading what the examination will find. If only she could go back to not knowing … but then she would only get sicker. No, better to see what the matter is.

This research project is about taking faith decay as seriously as our culture takes physical disease. Thanks for your interest. We are about to share sobering new research on Canadian "raised Christian" 18- to 34-year-olds. *For every five Catholic and Mainline Protestant kids who attended church at least weekly in the 1980s and '90s only one still attends at least weekly now as an adult; for those raised in Evangelical traditions it is one in two. And that's not all. Most who have quit attending altogether also have dropped their Christian affiliation.* But we also now have new insights on when they are leaving and why. Perhaps, more importantly, we also know why some have stayed and others have returned, and which groups do a good job of keeping them. And this is a chance to look at the data together and to discern what the Canadian church might do about it. Our research design emerged primarily from an Evangelical context; however, we hope that our data and analyses will be of use to Christian churches of every tradition.

In naming the story *Hemorrhaging Faith* we remind readers that we live in an individualistic and materialistic age that has been documented to be hazardous to human thriving.[1] It is a consumer society where identity construction is a never-ending, tiresome project we have to do ourselves.[2] It leaves everyone exhausted. As such, powerful motivations distract us from God and our best selves. Devout Christians in such a society are what sociologist Peter Berger calls cognitive minorities. They possess a remarkably liberating knowledge base. They believe in "another *reality of ultimate significance to [hu]mankind that transcends this reality and gives meaning to it*."[3] This "reality" is beyond the realm of scientific investigation; however, its social effects can readily be studied. Faith according to the writer of Hebrews is about "being sure of what is hoped for and certain of what is not seen." Some young adults raised Christian that we interviewed have such a faith and love the churches they attend. One such young adult is Lea from Quebec, who states that every Sunday she exits her church "utterly encouraged." She gets into her car having experienced "this massive fire that reaffirms my faith (which) convinces me of what Jesus said, to 'go forth and make disciples of all the world' and that He will be 'with us all our days.'"

Yet many we interviewed are less convinced than Lea. The surety of this "reality" had hemorrhaged. Some have been overwhelmed with finding a life and drifted away from church. For others the faith of childhood and teen years did not last amidst more pressing priorities. And for a small minority, the experience of faith and church left deep scars that sadly have not completely healed.

[1] Richard Eckersley, "Is Modern Western Culture a Health Hazard?" *International Journal of Epidemiology* 35.2 (2005): 252–258.
[2] Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
[3] Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 1–30.

What Saint Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Ephesus is written for every church in every age!

"Now to the God who can do so many awe-inspiring things, immeasurable things, things greater than we could ask or imagine through the power at work in us, to Him be all glory in the church and in Jesus the anointed from this generation to the next, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21, The Voice)

As we discern this story of dwindling Canadian numbers we remind ourselves of an "immeasurably more" God still at work! This is the God in our reality – not our dream world. We may not like the statistics or trends that are documented in the following pages. We may be alarmed that the valuable substance called faith appears to be bleeding away in Canada. *But faith is God-breathed … and can be God-resurrected.* A "more than we can imagine" God is at work in us to the glory of the church and Jesus for this generation and the next! In fact, we have had the chance to share our findings in three think tanks so far. In each case there has been a buzz in the room as we have imagined what a robust 21st-century Canadian church might look like. We share implications and insights from one of those think tanks in a later chapter.

We now invite you and your church into the conversation. Discern with us the numbers. Listen to young adult voices. And then imagine with us the best possible responses.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Barna group raised an alarm with American data suggesting 6 in 10 churchgoing teens become spiritually disengaged after high school.[4] The ability of Christian churches to retain young adults has been a hot topic in North America ever since. In 2007, Lifeway Research's analysis of Protestants in their twenties found 7 out of every 10 active high school seniors had spent at least a year in non-attendance by the time they were 23. Lead researcher Ed Stetzer lamented in *USA Today* that too many youth ministries were "holding tanks with pizza," even though youth desired a faith that transformed their lives and the world.[5]

Sociologist Christian Smith's seminal project on youth and religion later suggested that the *de facto* dominant faith among American youth was an anemic "moralistic, therapeutic deism," having little lasting effect.[6] Kenda Creasy Dean, one of Smith's lead interviewers, warned American churches that they were passing on what she described as an almost-Christian mutant faith to their kids.[7] Still others have pointed to new and ominous signs of fragile young adult Christian faith. Most recently, David Kinnaman's *You Lost Me*[8] and Fuller Theological Seminary's *Sticky Faith*[9] have added to the discussion.

What about Canada? Do Canadian high school graduates struggle to remain committed to Jesus? Could the American phenomenon of spiritually disengaged youth be happening here? How many of our young adults have checked out of church – and will they ever return?

Researcher and church practitioner David Sawler has zeroed in on the issue in Canada. Young adults shared their stories of leaving their faith in *Goodbye Generation* (2009).[10] Sawler continues to address the issue while shepherding an East Coast church plant.

Reginald Bibby, Canada's leading sociological authority on religion, documents ongoing spiritual restlessness in both the culture and churches. Among young Canadians he especially notes openness to rites of passages, and consistently advocates for Catholic and Protestant churches to take millennial ministry seriously.

To this growing body of Canadian research and very important dialogue we contribute this *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church.*

Our research was commissioned by the EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable. This network of seasoned youth workers has 334 years of collective youth ministry experience, which was put to the service of researchers Rick Hiemstra of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and James Penner of

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[4] Barna Group, *Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years* (Barna Group, September 11, 2006). (http://www.barna.org/teens-next-gen-articles/147-most-twentysomethings-put-christianity-on-the-shelf-following-spiritually-active-teen-years, accessed October 28, 2011.)
[5] Cathy Lynn Grossman, "Young adults aren't sticking with church," *USA Today* (August 6, 2007). (http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-08-06-church-dropouts_N.htm, accessed October 28, 2011.)
[6] Christian Smith with Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[7] Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[8] David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).
[9] Kara E. Powell and Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas To Build Lasting Faith Into Your Kids* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).
[10] David Sawler, *Goodbye Generation: A Conversation About Why Youth and Young Adults Leave the Church* (Winnipeg: Ponder Publishing, 2009).

James Penner and Associates to ensure a thoroughly thought-through research design that kept practical outcomes paramount. Hence this document is created with Protestant and Catholic lay church men and women and their clergy in mind.

Our research asks – and begins to answer – two fundamental questions:

1. To what degree do young adults in Canada today stick with or drop their Protestant or Catholic faith?
2. What keeps them in the faith, and what helps to usher them out?

Part I

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF CANADIAN YOUNG ADULTS

1

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is vital to understand the world that Canadian youth occupy. Their faith beliefs and spiritual practices do not form in a vacuum. Decisions and actions emerge from a broader cultural context. These factors work together to pull young adults away from faith engagement. It is also important to understand that the literature tends to describe a majority culture and not the minority cultures that provide a more hospitable home for Christian faith.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a reaction to Modernism. Modernism is a worldview characterized by a confidence in human reason, the accessibility of truth, and a confidence in progress – the idea that human beings are progressively and inevitably making the world a better place to live. Our culture is completing a transition from a state where Modernism was the dominant way of seeing the world to one where Postmodernism dominates. Postmodernism, which finds its intellectual and spiritual roots in the work of philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), placed the will to power at the center of its philosophy. For Nietzsche and others, the world is the product of our wills and our wills' desire for power. Power seeking is then the animating force of the world. Some of the cynical outcomes of postmodernism are that the assertion of truth is reduced to an attempt to coerce, and religion – with its comprehensive doctrine of truth – is reduced to organized coercion. Science, which was revered by Modernists as an enlightened window on truth, comes off little better than religion. Postmodernity is marked by skepticism and a loss of confidence in knowledge and in the doctrine of Progress. The cultural reaction to the appetites of the will to power has been to expose its motives, to unmask it. This is reaction is commonly called deconstructionism.

Radical autonomy

The pursuit of radical autonomy is a strategy for coping with what many young adults perceive to be the pervasive will to power in society. If I am autonomous then I am free from the demands, power and control of others. Groups make demands of its members, and if power is viewed with suspicion as an attempt to coerce then young adults are reluctant to participate in groups. Jean Twenge explains that she sees "no evidence that today's young people feel much attachment to duty or group cohesion."[11] What Twenge is describing, however, are groups that make restrictive demands of its members. Young adults move in and out of groups quite freely – as long as when they go in, the door stays wide open.

Identity formation

Jeffrey Arnett is responsible for coining the term "emerging adulthood." He defines it as the new developmental stage most people experience in advanced industrial societies between the ages of 18 and 29.[12] Considering it a new, normless, self-exploratory phase in the lifecycle for 21st-century young adults,

[11] Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled – and More Miserable than Ever Before* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2010), 6–7.
[12] J. J. Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the late Teens Through the Twenties," *American Psychologist*, 55 (2000): 469–480.

he explains that one of its most central components is the task of developing one's own identity.[13] Unlike in the past, identities are primarily formed rather than received. The corrosive effects of deconstruction have left the traditional elements of identity – race, gender, nationality, religion, etc. – tainted and largely unusable. Further, identities – if they are to be permanent – bind you to groups. So identities tend to be made and remade, and the materials they build these identities out of tend to flow from the will, i.e., what is inside me, rather than from traditional sources. Identity formation is an ongoing and exhausting project for many young adults.[14]

Religion

Young adults believe that religion should support and help the individual: Religion is therapeutic. Robert Wuthnow describes emerging adults as "spiritual tinkerers," who "piec[e] together ideas about spirituality from many sources, especially through conversations with one's friends."[15] Smith explains that for many young adults, "Religion exists to support individuals … There's no need for religion to have to all hang together in a single, coherent package of beliefs and lifestyle."[16] As a result, many emerging adults create a belief system of their own. Church commitment makes little sense to them because their religious convictions preclude association with an existing faith community.[17]

Further, because usefulness is the criteria for religion, rather than truth,

> Whatever anyone else wants to believe is fine with them. But this also means that none of what is distinctive about any given religious tradition, history, worldview, worship style, and so on matters all that much more to emerging adults. They suspect that these particularities might separate people of different religions, might bring into question the equal value of different cultures, might imply implicit judgments against others who are different ... Such an implication does not seem inclusive but rather exclusive and judgmental and so does not sit well with the majority of emerging adults.[18]

If religion is valued for its usefulness, it is seen to be useful because it provides a moral framework. However, most young adults believe that "right and wrong are easy" and can be reliably discerned from intuition.[19] Religion then is not strictly necessary, and when young adults examine the moral frameworks provided by religion they usually see them to be unnecessarily restrictive.

Consumerism

Television, internet and radio advertisements encourage people to be discontent with the old and insistent on obtaining the new. Media tend to highlight advantages for the customer. Readily accessible credit cards and loans make it easy for young people to acquire what they want, when they want.

Church may also be viewed as something to be consumed, a product or service to meet the needs of the consumer. To be worth participating in, church must gratify the needs and expectations of its members.

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[13] Jeffrey Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[14] Bauman, *Consuming Life*, 110.
[15] Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 135.
[16] Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 157.
[17] Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber, *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia* (Melbourne, Australia: John Garratt Publishing, 2007).
[18] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 81.
[19] *Ibid.*, 46.

In short, "people have to get something from their participation to make it worthwhile."[20] If their needs go unmet, or their freedom of expression is challenged, they simply abandon church. Perhaps they leave in search of another church, or perhaps they leave altogether.

Time pressure

Because people are busy and time is a precious commodity, religious commitment often falls to the wayside. Despite the original claim that technology would make us more efficient and free up time for us to engage in personal interests, the opposite is true.

Bibby explains that "what many of us didn't count on was the simple fact that technology would dramatically alter people's expectations of us, namely the speed with which we could turn things around. Those high expectations, in turn, are adding a lot of pressure to our lives."[21] We are busier than ever before.[22]

Emerging adults are especially prone to feeling overwhelmed by the time pressures placed on them, as they learn to complete adult responsibilities on their own. Smith contends that to emerging adults, "these errands and tasks can feel all-consuming."[23] After giving the first-fruits of their time to the demands of their employers and professors, they insist on preserving the small remaining remnant. Many are unwilling to spend it on faith-based practices. As a result, religious service attendance is often put on hold or put off altogether.

Information explosion

The amount and type of information available is ever-expanding and easier to access than ever before.[24] One would suspect that the over-abundance of media has far-reaching ramifications for today's young adults. They are exposed to excessive advertising, which gives rise to consumerist tendencies.[25] They are increasingly exposed to thoughts and ideas from around the globe, which feed into pluralistic values and may lead to disengagement from faith or church.[26]

"So I think I left my … my Christian faith, I didn't officially abandon it completely for, like, 5 or 6 years (after leaving church). I said, you know what, I'm not going to call myself a Christian anymore; I don't even know what that means. I started to journey, I started to explore other faiths, I started to get curious about other people, how they grew up, how they knew God and all that. Amazing Buddhists and Muslims, people who had great conversations about God and they were such loving people … I was always taught those people were wrong or evil. And then I met these people and I was like, this person is not evil, this person knows God, like, looking in their eyes, there was no denying it for me. So it just made me curious." Sandi (NOTE: All young adult names in this document are pseudonyms.)

Further still, as the main sources of information have shifted from print to electronic form, Wuthnow contends that the impermanence of information has created a "throw-away" society.[27] We learn that the ideas and opinions that are here today, or available through one source, may or may not be present tomorrow. Wuthnow notes that "as opportunities to switch channels and surf Web sites proliferate, we also gain the ability to follow our whims."[28] He suggests that "all of these may be nearly imperceptible

[20] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 4.
[21] Reginald Bibby, *The Boomer Factor: What Canada's Most Famous Generation is Leaving Behind* (Toronto: Bastian Books, 2006), 77.
[22] *Ibid.*, 87.
[23] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 77.
[24] Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, 92; and Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 45.
[25] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 45.
[26] Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, 14
[27] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 47.
[28] *Ibid*.

shifts in consciousness that also influence how young adults think about and experience their faith."[29] Regular church attendance may be too demanding for today's emerging adults who prefer to express their faith more intuitively.

The nature of emerging adulthood

Arnett explains the phase of emerging adulthood as marked by transition and change while a person matures from being an adolescent to adult. This phase of life is characterized by three things: life transitions, life distractions and lifestyle choices.

LIFE TRANSITIONS

As adolescents transition to adulthood they have the task of maneuvering their way through many life changes. Some are foreseen, others are not. Choosing to attend school in another province and having to relocate is foreseen, while the early death of one's father may not be anticipated. One might suppose that emerging adults are able to anticipate the impact of foreknown changes and therefore take steps to safeguard their faith. This does not appear to be so. Many life changes, such as divorce of parents, death of a family member, birth of a child, relocation or job loss, transition of a church leader, and end of an educational stage have a negative impact on the religious participation of emerging adults.[30]

Smith explains that the reason for this is threefold. First, "transitions by definition break patterns and routines, and establishing new ones that are very similar to the ones practiced earlier is more difficult than either simply continuing with the same ones or completely changing them."[31] This is seen powerfully in relocation. It is often easier for emerging adults to simply stop attending church rather than find a new congregation.[32]

"I was eighteen, the age I am now. And I just went to school, like, university and moved away from home. And just super busy with, like, soccer and, umm, school, friends, I dunno, just the whole transition. And not really having, like, a church that I knew of to go to, and not knowing anyone who's Catholic or goes to a church." Doreen

Second, "transitions also tend to drain resources and attention, including those in the most basic areas of life – arranging transportation, setting up a new living situation, learning a new place and systems, and so on – usually all consume time, energy, and money."[33] As a result, when it comes to religious engagements such as attending or finding a church, reading one's Bible or praying, there is a lack of time and energy.

Emerging adults learn to balance their schedules by assigning different levels of importance to life's demands. Religious participation is often assigned a spot at the bottom of the list.

"I got an apartment that has expensive rent and I need to pay for it, and so I just get as many hours as I can and most of the time I work every Sunday, and I'm definitely, now that I've worked there for a while, I'm going to start asking for every other Sunday off so I can go to church. But yeah. It's definitely because of the rent (that I'm not attending church)." Devon

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[29] *Ibid*.
[30] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*; Lifeway Research, "Young Adults Drop Out of Church," *Facts & Trends* (November/December 2007); Mason, Singleton and Webber, *The Spirit of Generation Y*; Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*; and Tim Clydesdale, *The First Year Out: Understanding American Teens After High School* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[31] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 75.
[32] Lifeway Research, "Young Adults Drop Out of Church."
[33] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 76.

Third, "transitions also expose people to fresh contacts in new social networks."[34] As a result, emerging adults form new relationships and take on new social behaviours (perhaps ones they weren't allowed to engage in while living with their parents), which may include the abandonment of church.

Unless they conscientiously give their faith a place of high priority, emerging adults are quick to put it on hold until life settles down. According to Tim Clydesdale, they simply store it away in a lockbox so they can focus on managing the basic responsibilities of daily life.[35] Many will take it out when life becomes more stable.

"I was 17 or 18 and I was truthfully partying really late on Saturday night and not getting up in the morning." Liz

LIFE DISTRACTIONS

In addition to life changes, emerging adults also face a number of distractions as they move from being a teenager to an adult.[36] They are distracted from religious commitment by the very task of transitioning from dependence to independence. Emerging adults are seeking to establish an identity that is unique to them, and learning to stand on their own financially and otherwise. Smith clarifies: "Serious religious faith and practice do not necessarily directly conflict with that mission, but they are not crucial or intrinsic to it either."

Attending church on Sundays, reading one's Bible, praying and other faith practices are not considered relevant to achieving autonomy.

"Coming into my second year university I thought that I had everything figured out, I had a good job, I was playing lots of sports, and school was going really well, I had a lot of friends, I was going out all the time, ... but I was starting to fall away from the faith, like, I didn't go to church every Sunday, it was more irregular." Melissa

Daily tasks often serve as distractions from religious commitment. Emerging adults are busy. They discover themselves having to balance school, work and play, while making sure everyday tasks, such as grocery shopping, paying bills and car repairs are also completed. All of these require time and energy. For those that are just determining how to balance these tasks, life can feel overwhelming. For many, it is difficult to perceive how church attendance could fit within the constraints of their already packed schedules.[37]

"I was stressing about going to university, my family life was a little bit difficult because my sister was getting into trouble a lot, and they were always stressing about that, I didn't have time to think about going to church, it was basically do your homework, try to get into university so I can get out of this house and not kill anybody." Sandi

Michael Mason et al point out that when it comes to employment, most young adults enter jobs that are casual or shift work and low-paying.[38] This can create uncertainty and instability for some. Emerging adults feel the need to make themselves totally available to their employer, which often means that church attendance shifts to the background.

Emerging adults also generally place high priority on spending time with friends. Social activities require time, energy and money. This means emerging adults have little time or energy to attend church. They are exhausted from dealing with "friendship drama." They work to pay for things like movies, enjoying a

[34] *Ibid*.
[35] Clydesdale, *The First Year Out*.
[36] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*; Lifeway Research, "Young Adults Drop Out of Church; Mason, Singelton and Webber, *The Spirit of Generation Y*; Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers;* and Clydesdale, *The First Year Out.*
[37] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 76
[38] Mason, Singleton and Webber, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 232.

few drinks or vacations. Weekend evenings are the most common time slots for hanging out. Sunday morning church service loses its appeal. It simply becomes too difficult to get out of bed and ready for church in the morning.[39]

"'Cause after you've been doing stuff the whole day at nighttime it's just like, 'Agh, gotta go to church.' And then you say, when you're waking up in the morning you're like, 'Uhhh.'" Alvin

LIFESTYLE CHOICES

For some emerging adults, their lifestyle prevents them from attending church. Emerging adults are on a mission to create their own identity and become independent. Experimentation is a part of this process.

"There was a good like three or four-year period in there where it was pretty much just my life was like, school, party, work, that sort of thing. Basically I guess you could say the life of a secular young adult." Lois

Church may become increasingly uncomfortable for emerging adults aware that their current lifestyle choices do not line up with what is taught and expected at church. The generation that despises hypocrisy in others is uncomfortable with it in themselves.[40]

"Umm, yeah. So started going out, drinking on the weekends and umm, basically I would just, I would see the same people that I went to church without drinking and then same thing like I said before, go and sit in church the next day and whatever, and pretend like we're all good people. And I couldn't do that. I felt like I was living, not living a lie, but I felt like I was, like I couldn't sit in church and I could not sing hymns about umm, you know professing how much I loved God and that sort of thing." Lois

Smith comments, "Most of them want to party, to hook up, to have sex in relationships, and to cohabit; or if they do not want to do these things now, many at least want to keep them as options for the future."[41] Because these ideals conflict with religion, young adults may put off faith participation.

Religious polarization

In summary, the picture painted by this literature may appear grim. But it is only part of the story. While a dominant culture has become increasingly secular, there is a large minority that remains vibrantly faith-filled. In his latest book on Canadian religion, Bibby notes the growing emergence of a very real religious polarization in this country.[42] Roman Catholics outside Quebec and many of the nation's evangelical churches have robust faith communities that are serving the spiritual needs of Canadians. In addition, there is a steady stream of Protestant and Catholic immigrants bringing their deeply committed faith with them. They are adding vitality to religious groups already here. Beyond this a number of denominations, led by evangelicals, and a number of para-church agencies, both Catholic and Protestant, work directly in youth and young adult ministries. These agencies, often with a specialty focus – camp, campus, inner city, discipleship, social justice – continue to thrive and find ways to connect a younger generation with the message and lifestyle of Jesus. Stories of involvement with vibrant such groups peppered our interviews. Two anecdotes from university campuses are illustrative. June found a denominational group.

"I was able to find, just rediscover my faith, and have it ignited." June

Jeremy stumbled on an interdenominational one.

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[39] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 76–78.
[40] E. H. Erickson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York, NY: Norton, 1968).
[42] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 83.
[42] Reginald Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back: Religion's Demise and Rise and Why It Matters* (Lethbridge, AB: Project Canada Books), 3.

"So I was in university, second year university, and my dad died when I was in grade 12, so when I was 18 my dad died. But then I went off to university pretty much right away, and his death definitely rocked me to contemplate the purpose of life and death, and why are we here and what's really the point? And I was involved in very heavy studies with engineering and I didn't like it and I just felt like I was going through the motions of life, what the world thought I should do, but it just didn't seem enough to satisfy me, why I'm here. And I started to become really, really depressed in university and addicted to sex and suicidal and so basically, out of all that pit, umm, yeah out of all that pit umm, I just umm, would cry myself to sleep with self-pity, and not really knowing how to get out of this and really feeling hopeless and not really wanting to live. And umm, I had some good friends in university that were Christians, and thankfully they were friends with me and they kept me going. And they invited me out to hear someone share their story one day, and that man shared about his relationship with God, and that was the first time I heard about having a relationship with God, so I was 20 years old. And I was so intrigued and it sounded exactly what I wanted … So basically, uh, I, so we talked and I said yeah I'll sleep on it. So the next day I went back to my dorm room and read something that she gave me which had Scripture on it and basically the gospel message. And for the first time ever I really felt like God was speaking to me and this was truth, that I really felt his presence and his peace in a very dramatic way. And I went through and I prayed to him and I just, I think for the first time finally accepted what he had done for me. So finally I received his forgiveness … That day was the beginning of my new life, and it was dramatic – like black and white, night and day, for me. So I have a very dramatic conversion, I would say, a very, I was a new person; anyone who knew me would've just been weirded out almost because I just had a joy that was inexplicable, and purpose in life that could not be thwarted." Jeremy

As a result, there is nothing inevitable about where the church finds itself in relation to youth. The Canadian religious situation is more dynamic than the broad social and cultural factors suggest. We consistently found a minority of young adults who spoke enthusiastically about faith communities they attended in the past or attend now.

Here is Lea's childhood memory of church.

"Since primary school I've attended Sunday School. I was always enthralled with the stories we were taught – and the ways, like the use of puppets, by which our teachers made these difficult concept approachable to children. If there was a snow storm and my parents decided not to go to church that week, I would cry." Lea

Janice speaks about the church and youth group she recalls attending as a teen.

"Oh my gosh, it's the best church I've ever been to. Like umm, Sunday was, I was interested. Like who was, Mr J was the minister I think at that point in time, yeah, and there's a part at the end where he would just tell like a story, it would be like a story relating to his life, so it was so interesting because you can relate, actually relate to it, because it's a real real-life scenario and he would teach you things. And it was so, it was like, I didn't just sit there and fall asleep, I actually was like so intrigued in what he was talking about. And I would be like oh, okay. I would learn a lesson at the end and be like, oh, that's what he's talking about. I loved going to church there. And youth group, it was so fun, it was when X was (the youth leader) there. And it was just so fun. We would sit, we would talk but we'd also make it so fun that it was like a thing that everyone looked forward to on Thursday. Everyone knew. Everyone at school would go. Because I started with L, and there's another guy N, and then we started bringing people from our schools. So in grade 7 and 8, our junior high was like, everyone knew about youth group." Janice

And Jeremy, who had a dramatic university conversion, talks about what he gets out of being a part of the church he attends now.

"I definitely get out of it a sense of community, family and belonging. I get out of it provision, like just, by being part of the community when there's need people help me out. Like the car I have now someone from the church helped me buy it. Like hello, that's wonderful right? And just the hospitality that they show. So I get a lot … So definitely a sense of community, a sense of commission, and belonging and just to have a family." Jeremy

So despite social and cultural influences, much of the future depends on how churches respond. Postmodernism may impact how youth hear the Gospel – rending them tone-deaf – but Modernism and the dominant cultures that came before also impacted earlier generations.

Therefore it is important to not let the realities of a secular Canada create psychological shackles for those involved in this country's churches. The task of communicating the gospel across generations is similar to the task faced by cross-cultural missionaries. Cross-cultural missionaries invest time researching cultural anthropology before they communicate their message. They want to be sure that what they say is what is actually heard. Similarly, we need to do our own cross-cultural anthropology work of youth.

This research project is one contribution to that ongoing anthropological work.

We now turn our attention to discerning at what point young adults leave church, what they believe – and how far they drift.

Part II

WHY AND WHEN CANADIAN YOUNG ADULTS ARE LEAVING THE CHURCH

2

WHEN WE'RE LOSING THEM – AND WHY

The pre-screen survey

Most of us already recognize that many of the children that grew up in our churches no longer regularly attend by the time they reach young adulthood.

How severe is the decline? Is it different for different denominational traditions? Are young adults still affiliating with the religious traditions of their childhood? If they do leave, do they tend to leave *before* or *after* high school graduation?

To answer these questions we examine the pre-screen data rather than our survey data (see Appendix A for a discussion of the methodology). The pre-screen survey was used to identify the panelists that we wanted to participate in our broader follow up survey.

We were specifically interested in those who had been either raised Christian or had subsequently come to identify themselves as Christian by the time they became young adults. The pre-screen data included questions on attendance at religious services and religious affiliation.

The pre-screen data asked for the frequency of attendance at religious services in childhood (K-Grade 8), teenage years (Grades 9–12) and as a young adult. It also asked for religious affiliation as a child and as a young adult, but not as a teenager. These responses are necessarily retrospective and largely impressionistic. We are dealing with *what young adults remember*, which is not necessarily the same as their actual affiliation or attendance at religious services. Affiliation and attendance could also have changed over the course of their childhood and teenage years. The answers given are their dominant memory or the synthesis of those memories.

Respondents were offered five options to describe their religious attendance: more than once a week; once a week; once or twice a month; a few times a year; seldom; or never. Several of these responses will be combined going forward to simplify analysis.

Attendance

To examine changes in attendance we require a common reference point. Therefore, we will present the following data according to religious affiliation as a child. This does not mean that the religious affiliation did not change, rather that we want to track changes within the same childhood groups.

Chart 2.1 below displays attendance in three life stages. From this chart we can make several observations. The decline in attendance between childhood and teen years is greater than the subsequent decline between the teen years and young adulthood.

Our interviews showed young adults who left at all three stages: childhood, teen years and after high school graduation. And they left for all sorts of reasons. Here is Bill, Stan, Raine, Lila, Stella, and Olivia sharing why and when they left in their own words.

"As a child (church attendance) was pretty stable … until it slowed down a bit. I don't know what age, maybe 10 or so, but we stopped going. And then we'd go Easter, Christmas, that sort of thing but not every week." Bill

"I can't pinpoint (when I left church) exactly. I was a teenager. We stopped going as a family and that's why our attendance decreased. Perhaps it was 'cause we switched parishes." Stan

"I got into some bad stuff when I was in high school and that's when I stopped going to church so definitely (high school) had a lot to do with it … there was a few things that had to do with it though like one was drug use for sure." Raine

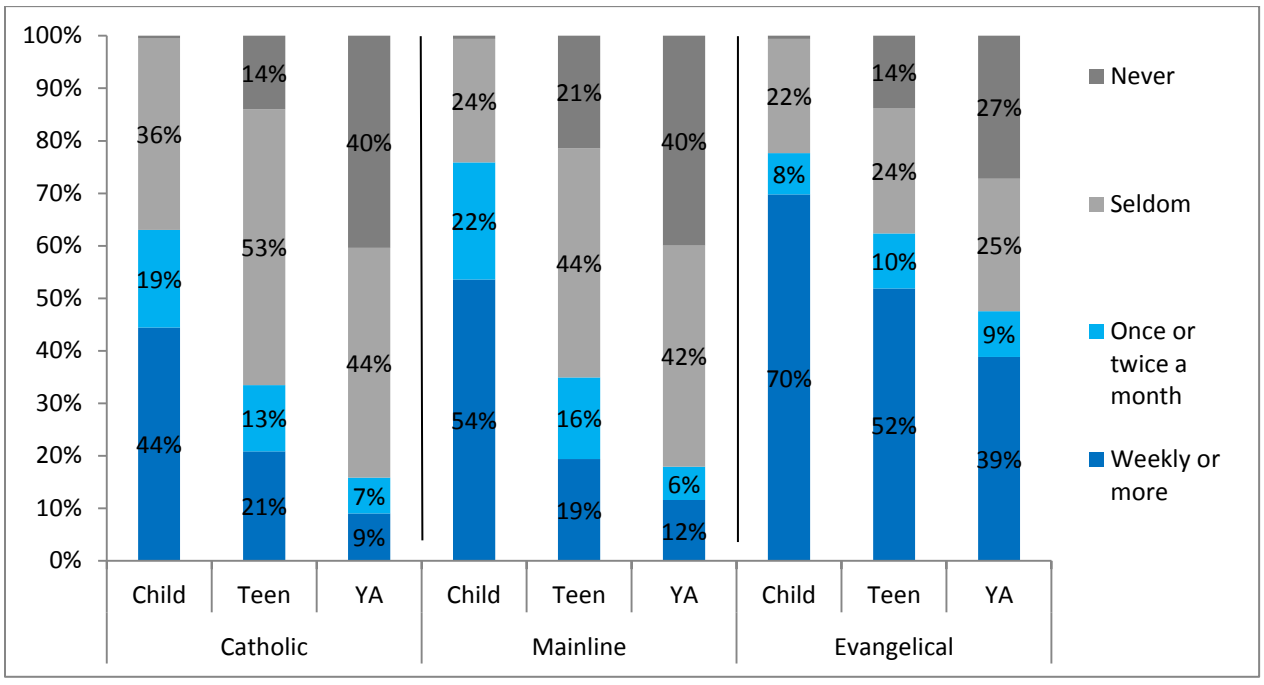
"I stopped going to church initially when I found out I was pregnant, but I stopped going completely once I started showing. That's when I stopped going. I didn't really want to deal with the questions and the stares and that type of thing, and the judgment which I knew that was coming. 'Cause I've been at the same church since I was a baby, and everybody feels like they need to give you their own parental advice. So that, and that I wanted to avoid, so I completely stopped going to church once I found out I was pregnant, once I started showing." Lila

"I'd become a member because I felt like it was important … but I got to the point where I felt like, I wasn't, it wasn't appropriate for me to be a member. That I was not, I didn't believe, in like the precepts, the doctrine of the denomination. And I was having a hard time with the denomination in general. And in, in the institution of the church, and so I left the church but still had umm, Christian friends." Stella – who left in her twenties during a crisis of faith linked to her mother's death

"I am glad that in our society we are free (to go or not go to church) … but to take a few years to step back (from church) and relax feels good." Olivia

The decline is particularly evident for Catholic and Mainline traditions. By young adulthood only 1 in 10 respondents raised in Catholic and Mainline traditions reported attending religious services at least weekly – compared to 4 in 10 raised in Evangelical traditions.

Chart 2.1. Attendance at religious services, by religious affiliation in childhood for various life stages



It appears from chart 2.1 above, that those raised in the Roman Catholic tradition had substantially lower attendance rates right from childhood. These national Catholic numbers, however, are distorted by Quebec's unique situation.

The Unique Spiritual Dispositions of Young Quebecers

by sociologist Bruno Désorcy

The tendencies observed throughout the survey, especially from religious practices, suggest that young Quebecers are probably more secularized than the young adults in the Rest of Canada (ROC). It is important to understand that secularization does not equal hostility towards religion. Secularization is the marginalization of religion in culture. Because religion lost its public credentials, it has become more and more seen as quaint folklore in modern societies. At least this was the situation at the end of the last century. Since then, especially since 9/11, religion has come back on the public agenda of the Western world.

In 2008, Québec held a provincial Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences. One of the main topics was the request for religious adjustments in the public school system and the healthcare system. French Canadian Quebecers feared at the time that the religious traditions from immigrants would jeopardize the heritage of the Quiet Revolution (1960), in particular gender equality and secularism (meaning here *laïcité* – the separation of Church and state) in the public services. Here is a quotation of the report of the Commission that aptly explains the present situation of religion in Québec:

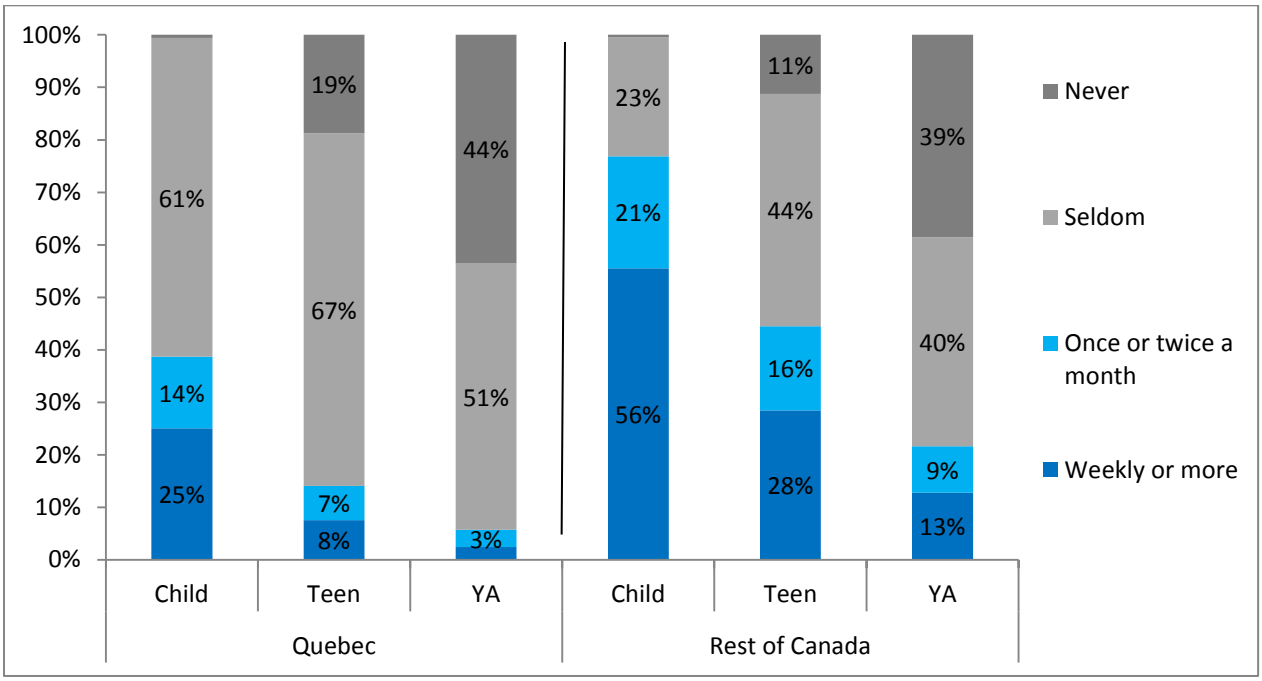
> French-Canadian Quebecers have unpleasant memories of the period when the clergy wielded excessive power over institutions and individuals. It would be unfair that this situation leads them to direct at all religions the painful feeling inherited from their Catholic past.*

This led the francophone Quebecers to transfer their negative feelings inherited from their Catholic past to all religious manifestations. For most baby boomers in Québec, the public expression of religion is not to be trusted. These parents did not transmit any religious culture to their children. Although the participants of this survey (18- to 34-year-olds) were exposed to the Christian heritage as children, they were still raised in a society that cut all the bridges with their religious past. The Montréal anthropologist Solange Lefebvre underscores the fact that our society is suspicious when facing any individual religious choice that is well defined. The rest of Canada needs to better understand the spiritual context in which young adults of Québec are living and vice versa. We need to learn from one another.

* Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Building the Future, A Time for Reconciliation*, Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2008).

The religious affiliation of those in Quebec is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. In our pre-screen 82% of Quebec respondents – 491 out of 596 – indicated that they were raised Roman Catholic. In fact, 36% of our 1,352 Roman Catholic respondents nationally were from Quebec. It is helpful, therefore, to look at these same attendance patterns for Roman Catholics in Quebec and in the Rest Of Canada (ROC) (see chart 2.2 below).

Chart 2.2. Attendance at religious services by those who were raised Catholic, for various life stages, Quebec and the Rest of Canada



In Quebec, 1 in 4 young adults who were raised Catholic reported attending religious services weekly or more in their childhood, compared to more than half in the rest of Canada.

"Quebec was built in part by monks and nuns who educated us so I understand that the church has played a role but should continue to do so and in a way … to adapt to reality rather than wanting people to adapt to their belief. If I tell you to come in my group but I want you to be like this you would not join my group but if I say I'll adapt my formula so all the people who are interested can go there, well, maybe that way there is more chance to have more people join." Micah

Consider:

1. *Why do you think young adults are reporting such large declines in attendance between childhood and teenage years?*
2. *Why is the decline between childhood and the teenage years greater than the decline between the teenage years and young adulthood?*
3. *Why is the decline between childhood and the young adult years more pronounced for Catholics and Mainline Protestants than for Evangelical Protestants?*

Religious affiliation

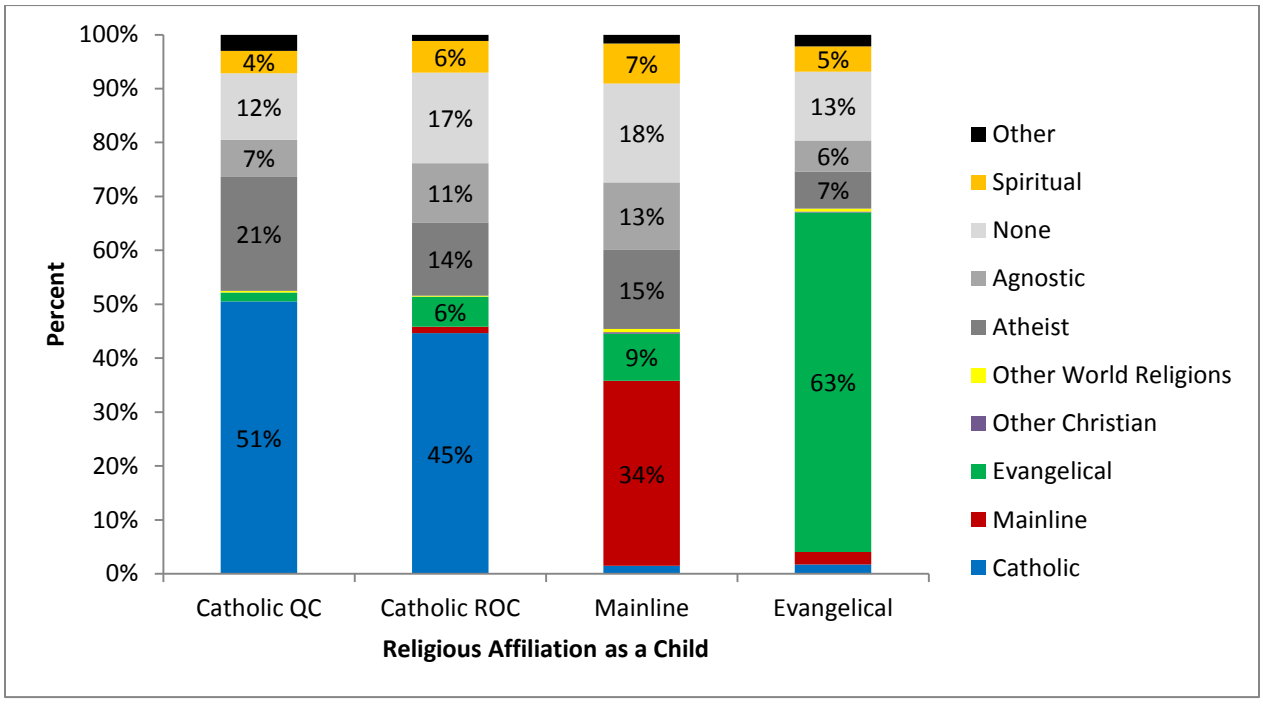
Religious affiliation measures a person's identification with a religious tradition. Affiliation does not necessarily indicate participation. However, one is unlikely to participate in a religious tradition unless one first identifies with it. In this sense, affiliation can be a helpful measure of religious commitment.

In this section we will consider changes in religious affiliation between childhood and young adulthood, then examine the same data by gender.

Chart 2.3 below displays the religious affiliation for young adults according to their reported religious affiliation in childhood. Many young adults no longer affiliate with the religious tradition in which they were raised. The greatest attrition in affiliation was experienced by Mainline traditions with a loss of about two-thirds. Roman Catholics held on to roughly half of their childhood affiliates, while Evangelicals kept the affiliation of close to two-thirds of the children who were raised in their churches. While the rate of attrition varies from one tradition to the next, if we do not ultimately see a large return in young adulthood, all traditions eventually decline unless replenished through conversion or immigration.

The loss in religious affiliation primarily reflects a decline among those who were born in Canada. Our survey also over-represents those who have less frequent attendance patterns. We would expect a steeper rate of affiliation attrition among those who have ceased to attend or substantially scaled back their attendance.

Chart 2.3. Religious affiliation of young adults, by religious affiliation as a child

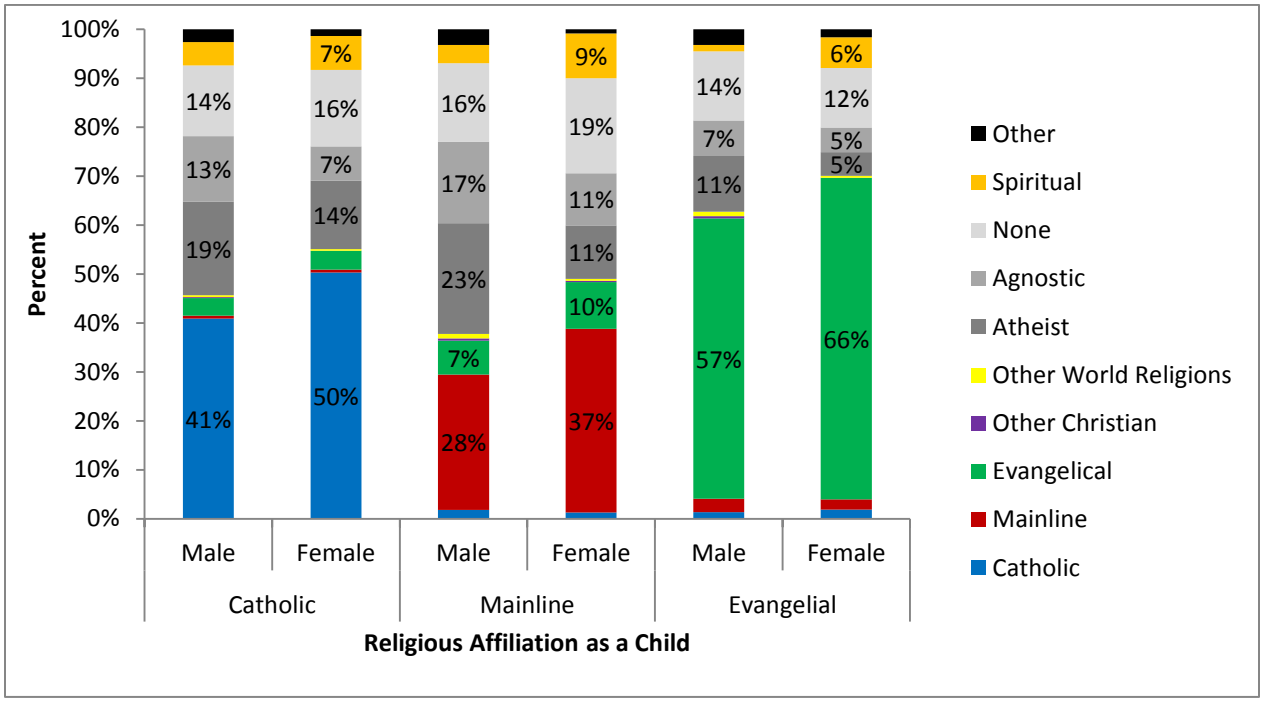


Note: Catholic QC are those who were raised Catholic in Quebec and Catholic ROC are those who were raised in the Rest Of Canada.

When young adults stop affiliating with the tradition of their childhood they are usually not re-affiliating with another organized religious tradition, Christian or otherwise. The majority are identifying as atheist, agnostic, spiritual or none. While these four categories do not necessarily imply an absence of spiritual practice in their lives, none are connected with organized religious groups.

When we consider the same religious affiliation data by gender, we see that in each tradition the attrition rate for males is greater than females (see chart 2.4 below). When males cease to affiliate with the religious tradition of their youth they are more likely to identify as atheists. Females are more likely than males to take on a "spiritual" identity.

Chart 2.4. Religious affiliation of young adults, by religious affiliation as a child, male and female



Consider:

1. *Why do you think young adults are leaving organized religious traditions?*
2. *Why do you think males who leave the Christian tradition of their childhood tend to become atheist while females take on a "spiritual" identity?*

Attendance and affiliation are standard measures of religious commitment. While both are in decline, religious affiliation is still significantly stronger than attendance. This is true for the general population as well. Statistics Canada released a general social survey on giving and volunteering, indicating that weekly attendance at religious services in Canada had fallen to 16.3% in 2010 – a number that includes all religious traditions.[43] The young adults in our pre-screen survey reported a weekly attendance rate of 19%, which is higher than the national number. However, we were only examining those who were raised in the church. Both attendance and religious affiliation attrition are significant issues for the church.

We'll now turn our attention to trying to understand *why* our young adults are both leaving and staying.

[43] "Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Tables Report, 2010," Statistics Canada (2010): 12. (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-649-x/89-649-x2011001-eng.pdf, accessed April 11, 2012).

3

FOUR SPIRITUAL TYPES

In any social group, clusters of people will form around interests, priorities or needs. In many cases we witness these groups forming into organizations like clubs or voluntary societies.

In our current culture, young adults tend to eschew the labels that go along with formalizing their interests or beliefs. Groups can, however, be discerned by identifying patterns in the answers to a series of questions. This kind of analysis is called cluster analysis. When we examined the responses to our survey, which included a total of 84 questions (Appendix C), the answers to 15 questions tended to cluster in four groups. We will call these groups Spiritual Types.

Inclusion of the 15 questions in the cluster analysis does not indicate they are any more or less important than the others. Rather, their inclusion indicates the four distinct patterns apparent in the answers to these questions – and that these patterns were the strongest observable patterns.

These four spiritual types help to explain why some young adults still identify with and engage in church life and others do not.

Four types

The 15 questions that were used in our cluster analysis are listed below. Respondents could choose strongly agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree or strongly disagree.

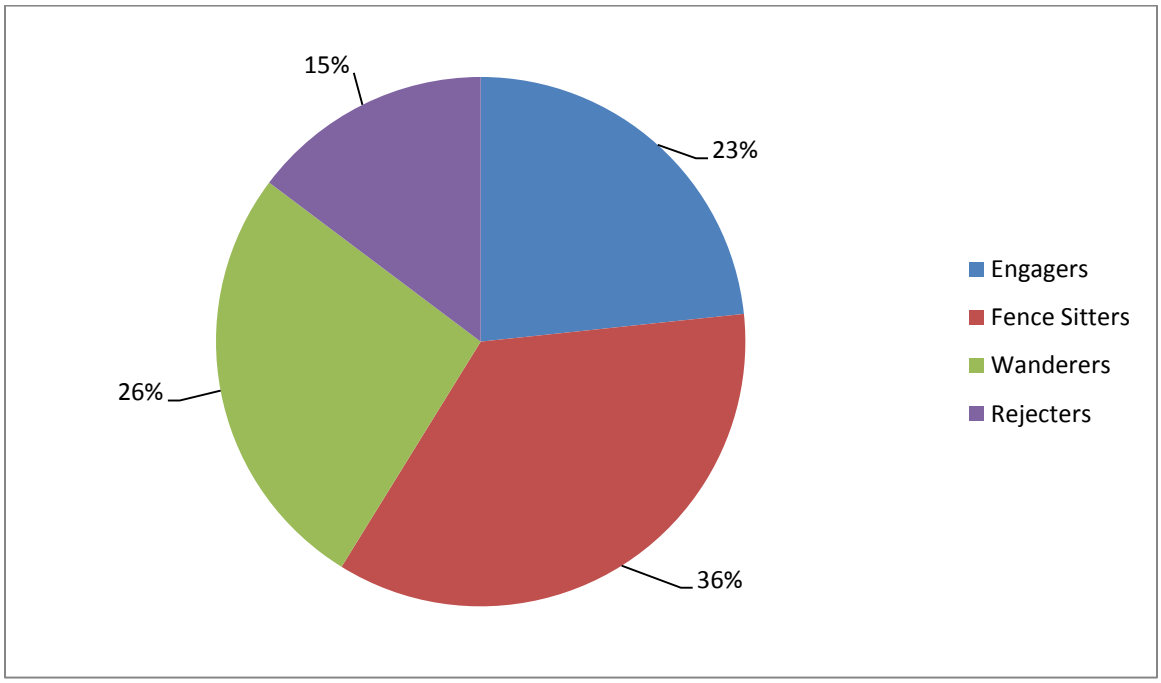
1. I believe God answers my prayers.
2. I have experienced God's love personally.
3. I have experienced emotional healing through help received from a church.
4. What is right and wrong is a matter of personal opinion.
5. There exists a place of reward in the afterlife sometimes called heaven.
6. There exists a place of reward in the afterlife sometimes called hell.
7. Churches should solemnize gay and lesbian marriages just as they solemnize heterosexual marriages.
8. I think the lifestyle demands that churches make are totally unrealistic choices for me.
9. Attending church would be hypocritical for me.
10. I think going to church is pointless.
11. The church is out of touch with what is important in our society.
12. The church makes a difference in my community.
13. I think it is extremely important for churches to have programs geared toward teens.
14. I think it is extremely important for churches to have programs geared toward young adults.
15. Those in church leadership are able to help me explore my toughest questions.

We have named the four clusters, or spiritual types, "Engagers," "Fence Sitters," "Wanderers," and "Rejecters." The order of these types indicates their relative orientation to Christianity and the church. Engagers are most positive and Rejecters are the least.

Chart 2.5 below shows the distribution of the four spiritual types across our sample. This does not necessarily represent the distribution of these types across the general population of those who were raised Christian in Canada. The presence of a "non-response bias" (see Appendix A) could mean that our

survey tends to generate more extreme responses to questions. This would suggest that both the Engagers and Rejecters are over-represented.

Chart 2.5. Distribution of spiritual types across the sample



We'll now examine some of the characteristics of these different types. In this analysis we will examine two factors: demographic traits of the four types and differences in responses to the questions used to form the clusters.

Who are the spiritual types?

When we examine the demographics of the four spiritual types we consider religious affiliation, region and gender.

Engagers are primarily those who still affiliate with a Christian tradition. Engagers, in our interviews, express a participatory posture inside the church and an openness to a supernatural referent.

"Okay. One thing I like about church is the fact that we're challenged all the time, and when I say challenged, challenged with the Word. And … we need to be accountable to the Lord…. And then there's the practice, challenged with people because people are not perfect, they're different." Edna

In our sample 6 in 10 of Engagers affiliate with an Evangelical tradition (see chart 2.6 below).

Most Fence Sitters still have a Christian religious affiliation; however, more than 25% no longer indicate an identification with an organized religion.

In our interviews we came across Fence Sitters who had a pull toward and a resistance against the faith community they were raised in.

"I just think (Christianity)'s something I've grown up with and it's so deeply rooted. And there's a part of me that really wants to fight for it. And then there's a part of me where I'm like, well, what's the point, like if I don't believe it, like, I dunno. It's so deeply seated that I do want it to happen but at the

same time right now I don't really care, like I don't even know if I believe in a god right now. I do believe that there's something higher out there, but I don't necessarily believe it's the God of the Bible. And umm, it's really weird." Anna

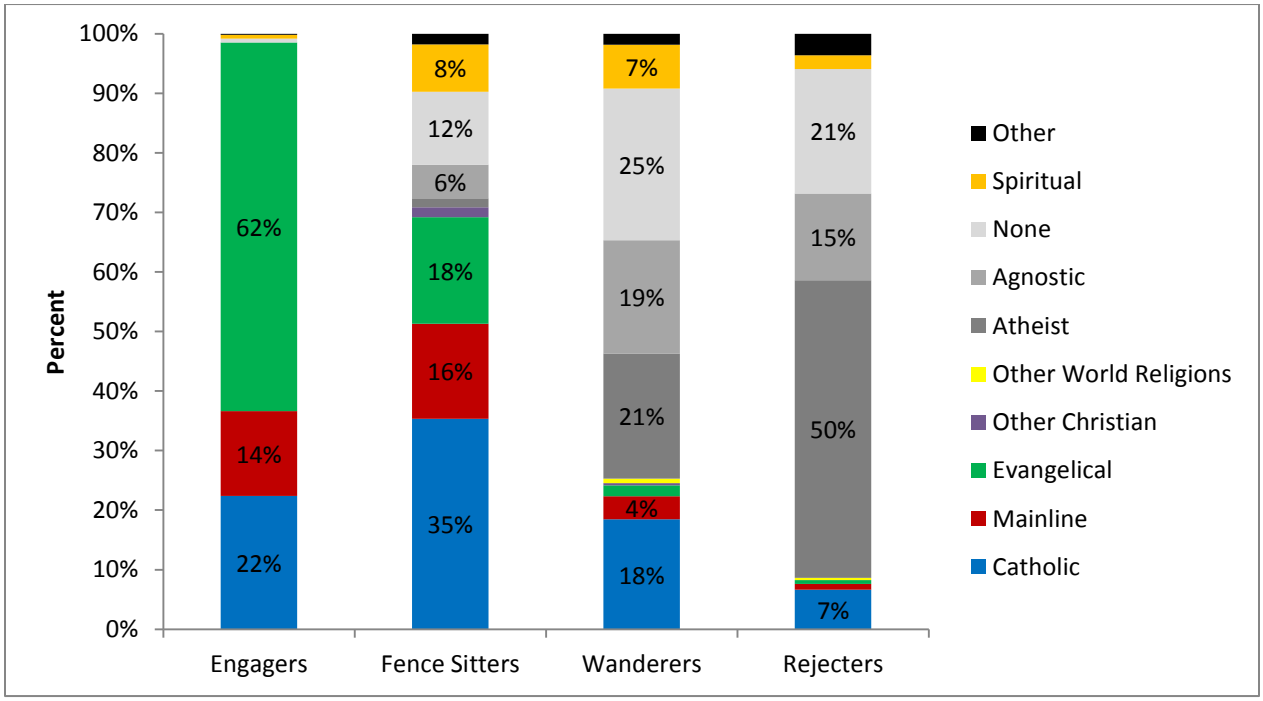
Wanderers and Rejecters have typically unhitched their spiritual identities from the traditions in which they were raised. While Wanderers without a Christian religious identity divide their spiritual self-description between Atheist, Agnostic and None, 5 out of 10 of Rejecters describe themselves as Atheists. The difference between Wanderers and Rejecters is that Wanderers tend to drift from church whereas Rejecters tend to have some kind of scarring experience they feel has forced them out. Notice how Jack talks of simply wandering away from his church and faith in high school.

"Well, you know, choosing friends over family and church is a big thing. I'd have a sleepover on Saturday and miss going to church … like in high school, like, they [my friends] were just like, 'We don't like your God' and I was like, 'Oh, maybe I shouldn't either.' That's really all 'cause nothing changed at home and nothing changed at church, but it was like I spent all my day at school [and I was under] a lot of stress from dance and a lot of stress from school, um, I dunno, just being a teenager and, you know, it wasn't necessary to go to church …" Jack

Rejecters tend to feel driven out of their churches and perhaps struggle for a season within churches before withdrawing. This Rejecter said about her experience before she left,

"It's a lot of torment, less since I'm no longer going. It had gotten to the point where I cried on Sunday afternoon on a regular basis because I felt trapped. I wanted to take the microphone and tell everyone what I thought, and by stopping going I stopped wanting to tell everyone the little nuances I wanted to make." Juliette

Chart 2.6. Religious affiliation of young adults, by spiritual type

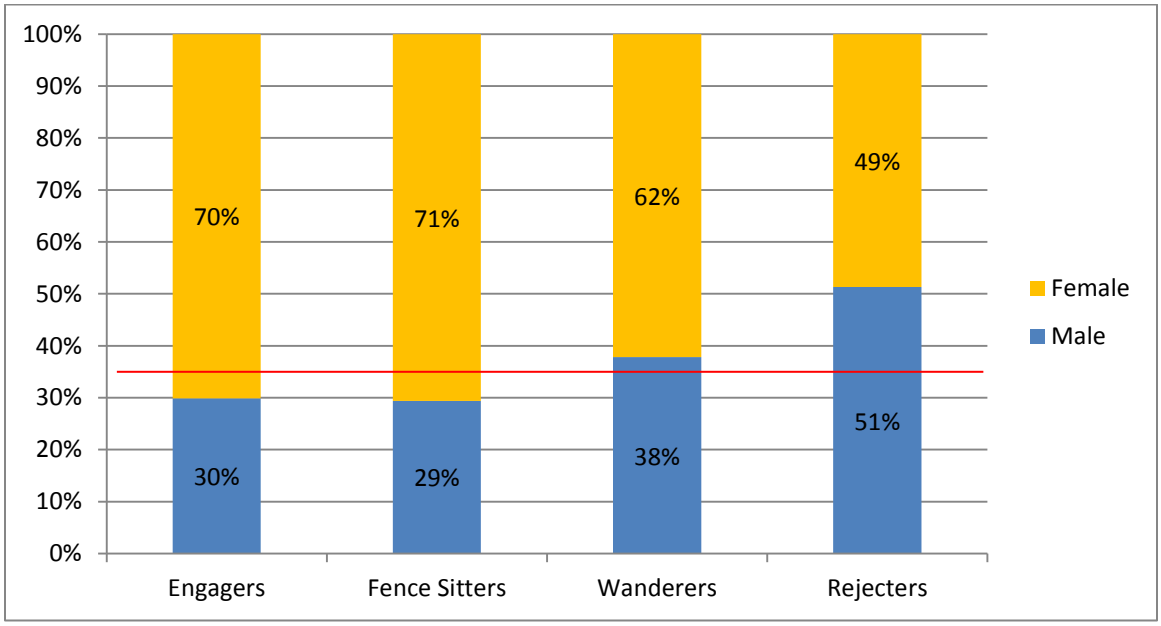


The proportion of different spiritual types in each region of the country roughly matches those in chart 2.5 with the following exceptions. Engagers are under-represented and Rejecters are over-represented in

Quebec. Wanderers and Rejecters are slightly more likely to emerge from an urban context than either the Engagers or Fence Sitters.

An identifiable continuum exists from Engagers to Rejecters, where the openness and disposition to the church and faith deteriorates. We can now detect a growing male representation as we move along the continuum from Engagers to Rejecters (see chart 2.7 below). The reader will recall that the female proportion of our sample was high (65%), and so deviations from the 65:35 ratio of females to males should be used as the benchmark when interpreting chart 2.7. Still, we can identify that when young adults leave the church, it is a disproportionately male group that is leaving.

Chart 2.7. Gender and spiritual type



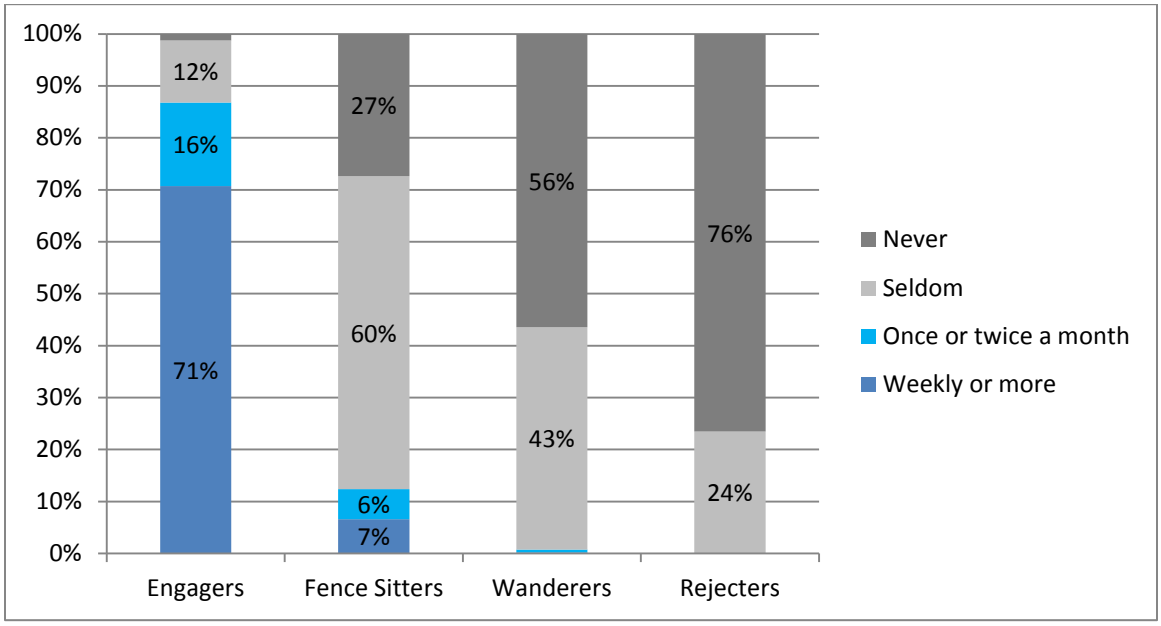
Note: The red line indicates where the ratio of males and females breaks in the entire sample.

Engagers are the most likely to be present in church services regularly. Rejecters are not. Engagers are more likely to be from the Prairies and the East Coast; Rejecters, from central Canada and Quebec in particular. Engagers (and Fence Sitters) are more likely to be female; Rejecters tend to be male.

Attendance at religious services

Engagers form the one spiritual type that consistently attends religious services. A minority of Fence Sitters attend at least monthly. Wanderers and Rejecters are very rarely in the pews on Sunday morning (see chart 2.8 below).

Chart 2.8. Frequency of attendance at religious services, by spiritual type



What were the patterns?

We will report on the 15 questions in the cluster analysis according to the four thematic sections:

1. Experience
2. Doctrine/Lifestyle
3. Attitude
4. Church Programs

We will also analyze the influence of these factors on attendance. While attendance did not go into the cluster analysis, it is an important measure of religious commitment.

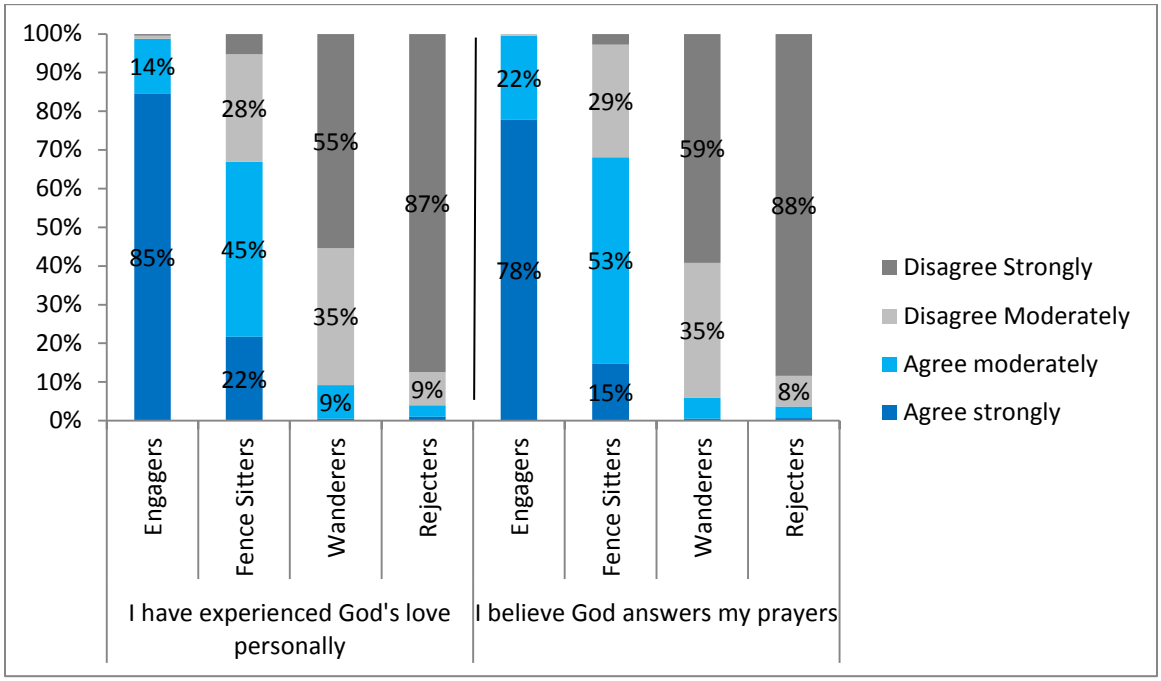
EXPERIENCE

In this section we will consider the following three questions related to personal experience:

1. I believe God answers my prayers.
2. I have experienced God's love personally.
3. I have experienced emotional healing through help received from a church.

Two of these questions deal with the respondent's experience of God, and the third the respondent's experience of the church. First, we will look at the respondents' experience of God, and then their experience of church.

Chart 2.9. Personal experiences of God, by spiritual type

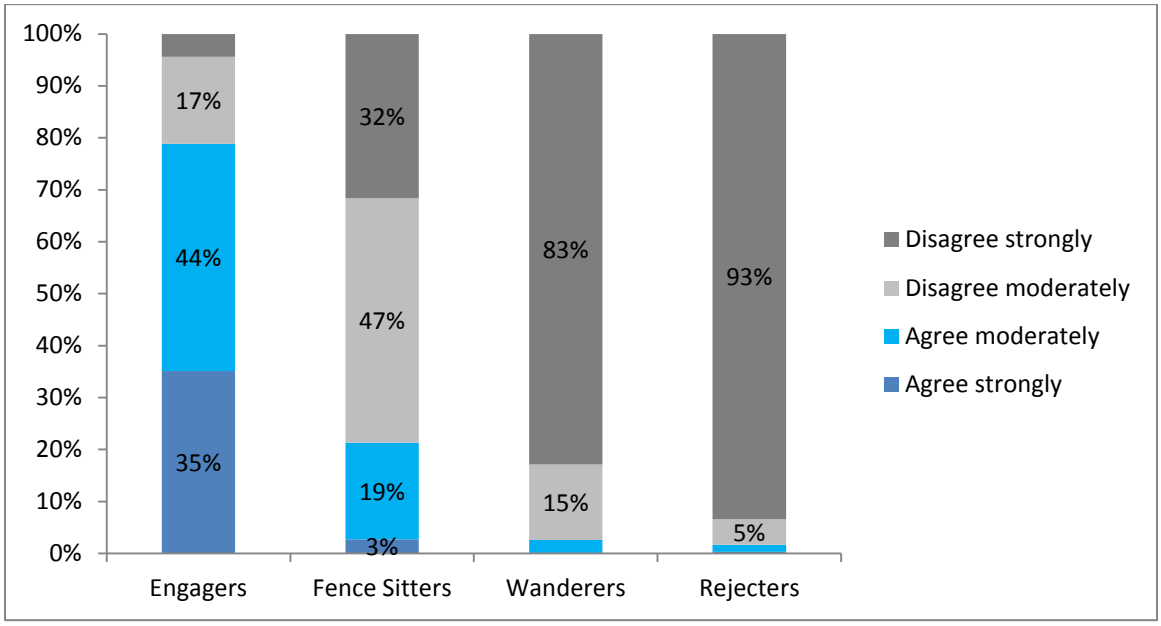


The patterns in chart 2.9 – for respondents' experience of God's love and his answers to their prayers – are remarkably similar. Engagers and Fence Sitters both tend to report positive experiences of God. The Wanderers and Rejecters do not. Because this division of types mirrors their church attendance patterns, we can say that experiencing God in a positive way is strongly correlated with higher rates of church attendance at religious services.[44]

The rate for each type who either strongly agreed or moderately agreed that they had experienced emotional healing through the church closely mirrored their patterns of weekly and monthly attendance (see chart 2.8 about attendance and chart 2.10 below). You are less likely to have an experience of the church if you're not there. The strength of this measure of experience with the church was not as strong as the experience with God.

[44] In fact, the correlation coefficients for each of these questions with attendance is greater than 0.65 and is significant at the 0.01 level. This is an extraordinarily strong result for sociological studies.

Chart 2.10. "I have experienced emotional healing through help received from a church," by spiritual type



Consider:

1. *Why might young adults have more positive experiences with God than the church?*
2. *Why might most Wanderers and Rejecters who have grown up in the church report they never experienced the love of God personally?*

DOCTRINE/LIFESTYLE

In this section we will consider the following five questions related to doctrine or lifestyle choices (often proscribed by doctrine):

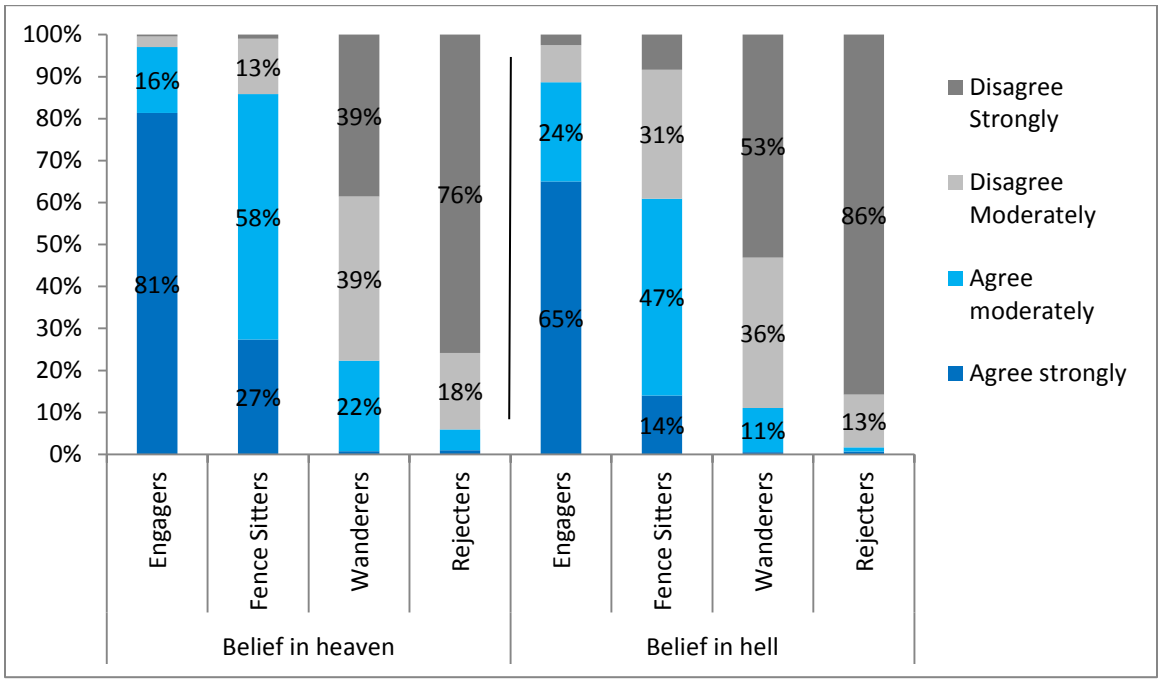
1. There exists a place of reward in the afterlife sometimes called heaven.
2. There exists a place of reward in the afterlife sometimes called hell.
3. What is right and wrong is a matter of personal opinion.
4. I think the lifestyle demands that churches make are totally unrealistic choices for me.
5. Churches should solemnize gay and lesbian marriages just as they solemnize heterosexual marriages.

On first glance, there appear to be two kinds of questions (or statements) in this group of questions: doctrine and questions about lifestyle. Because the concepts of heaven and hell are present in traditional readings of Scripture and historic ecumenical creeds, those questions help measure traditional orthodoxy. What gives them particular force in this survey is the emphasis on judgment. Young adults tend to see judgment as non-acceptance – another way to talk about rejection of the whole person. While heaven as a reward is a more palatable option than hell as a punishment, we conjecture that what we are actually measuring here is less about doctrinal orthodoxy and more about the receptivity of having one's life judged by another, in this case God.

Viewed through this lens, each question represents an openness to criticism of one's actions or beliefs. Questions 1 and 2 help determine an openness to God's judgment, and the subsequent questions help determine an openness to the church's judgment.

We will first examine openness to God's judgment.

Chart 2.11. Openness to God's judgment, by spiritual type

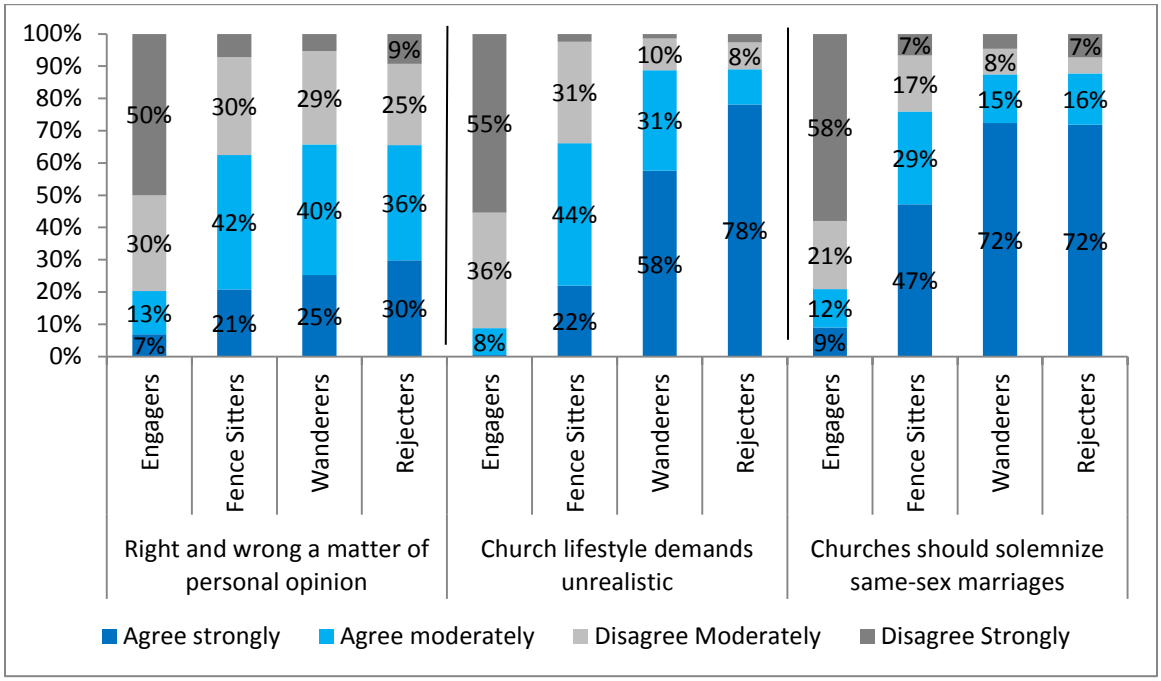


In chart 2.11 above we can see similar patterns of openness to the concepts of heaven and hell. Engagers are the most open and Rejecters the least.

When it comes to the Fence Sitters and Wanderers there can be a fair bit of ambivalence – even inner turmoil – when discussing this subject. Anna, an Evangelical who left faith but contemplates a return, talked about the afterlife this way.

"There's a lot of time I think I don't really necessarily believe there's life after death right now. I'm pondering, toying around with the idea that once you die it's done, like which would put the end to the point of belief right? Because people want to spend eternity with their creator and to tell people the news that he's come so that they can spend eternity with them and spread the love around them and continue his work. I'm like what's the point in doing that, giving your life to do a whole bunch of things instead of enjoying your time while you're here before it's done. But at the same time there's this nagging, well if it is true, I'm screwed, because I haven't been doing that." Anna

Chart 2.12. Openness to the church's judgment, by spiritual type



When it comes to judgment by the church, there is even less openness than there was to judgment by God. Those who tend not to be in church are unlikely to be open to the lifestyle judgments or requirements of the church. We cannot, based on our data, conclude that the church's judgments actually cause young adults to leave. As with all laws, rules, or taboos, we may object to the rules, but often the underlying objection is to the authority of the rule maker.

Consider:

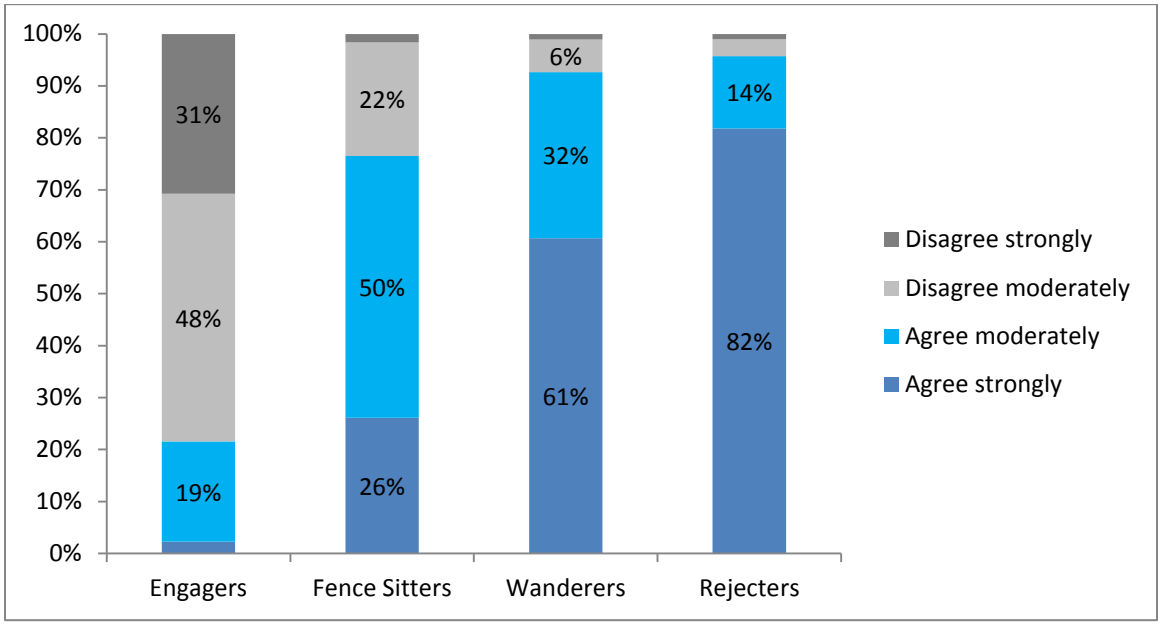
1. *Why might Engagers be more open to lifestyle restrictions than other spiritual types?*
2. *When young adults reject the lifestyle requirements of the church, is the objection to the rule or to the authority behind the rule?*

ATTITUDE

When we consider attitude, we are examining how young adults assess the church and their place in it. These are summary evaluations. There are two types of questions. First, young adults' assessment of how they fit in the church (is it hypocritical for me to attend church?), and second, summary evaluations of church.

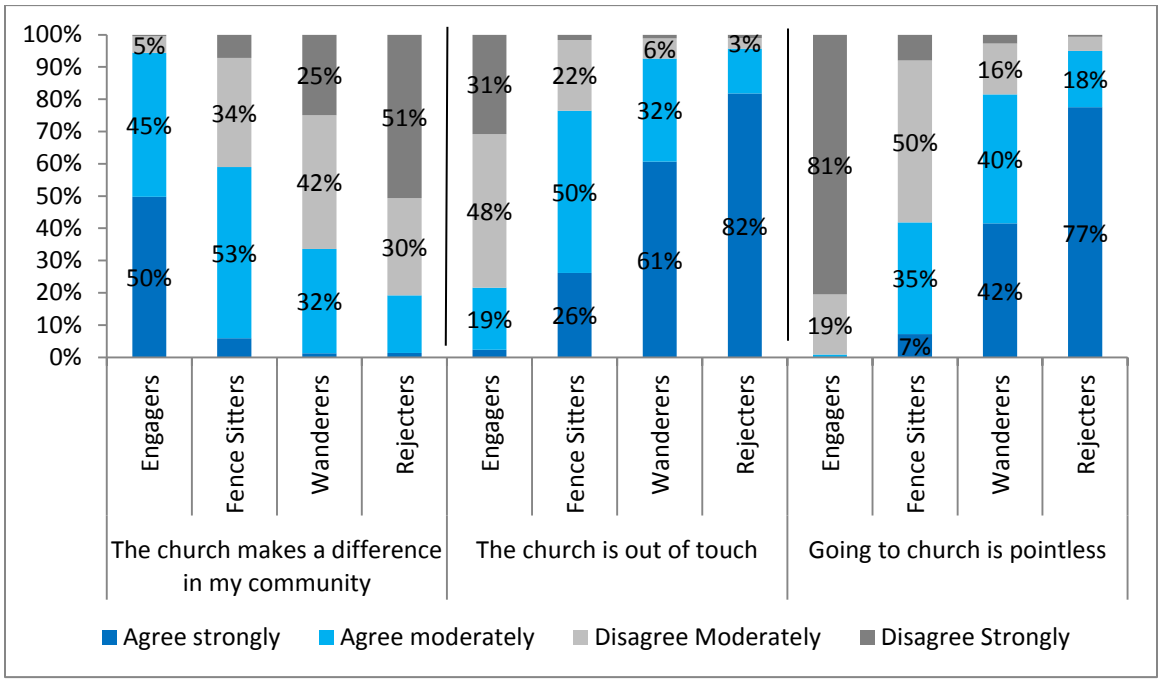
1. Attending church would be hypocritical for me.
2. I think going to church is pointless.
3. The church is out of touch with what is important in our society.
4. The church makes a difference in my community.

Chart 2.13. "Attending church would be hypocritical for me," by spiritual type



Almost all of those outside of Engagers felt that it would be at least somewhat hypocritical for them to attend church. This suggests that some of the lifestyle conflicts we examined above are being resolved by removing themselves from church communities.

Chart 2.14. Summary evaluations of church, by spiritual type



With the statement, "The church makes a difference in my community," we indicate that the church is not the respondent's community, or at least, not her only community. It is the relevance of the church community to others that is being measured. If that relevance is judged to be positive, then the

respondent likely belongs to a spiritual type that is still attending church. If church is judged pointless or out of touch, the respondent tends to be a Rejecter.

Consider:

1. *How well do we understand the different communities young adults inhabit?*
2. *Given that many young adults judge the church to be pointless, what would you say is the point of the church?*
3. *How can the church stay "in touch" with the various communities that our young adults inhabit?*

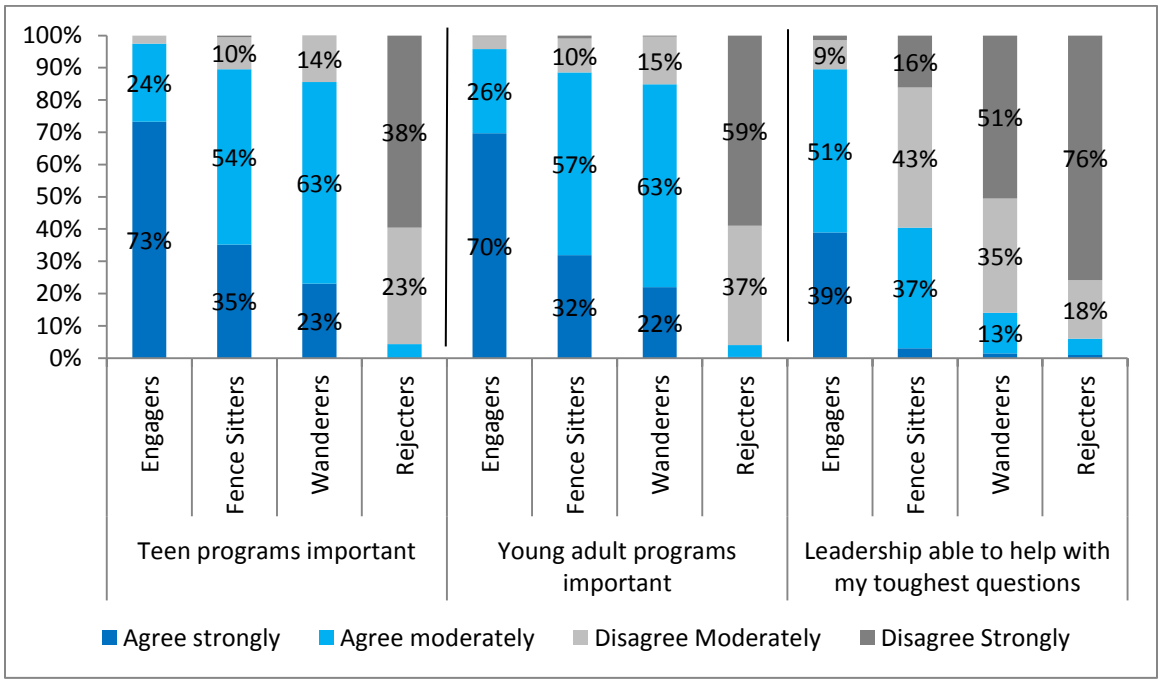
CHURCH PROGRAMS

What is it that young adults need from church? Our cluster analysis settled on these three questions.

1. I think it is extremely important for churches to have programs geared toward teens.
2. I think it is extremely important for churches to have programs geared toward young adults.
3. Those in church leadership are able to help me explore my toughest questions.

The first two questions on programs help determine the need for the church to have a place for young adults. Other questions have examined the relevance of the church to society in general. The question on the ability of leadership to help young adults explore their toughest questions speaks to the relevance of church for young adults individually. It is significant to note that young adults are not necessarily seeking to be informed of the answers; rather, they would like someone to help them discover those answers.

Chart 2.15. Church program questions, by spiritual type



Only Rejecters, who tend to see church as pointless, do not consider it at least moderately important for churches to have programs for teens and young adults. It is revealing, however, how few of any spiritual type report that church leadership is able to assist them with their most difficult questions.

Consider:

1. *What are the toughest questions of young adults?*
2. *Whose questions do we tend to answer as a church?*

Generally, Engagers are in the church and offer a positive evaluation of church. Fence Sitters may still have a connection with the church, but conflicts over lifestyle and relevance tend to keep them on the fence. Wanderers, while not having a completely negative evaluation of the church, have moved on. The church no longer has their attention. Rejecters have not just left the church – they carry with them a negative evaluation of the church.

These spiritual types can help us to assess possibilities to engage young adults of different types. There are clear, detectable distinctions in the responses of the types to questions of experience, relevance and lifestyle/doctrine. Few young adults who have not experienced a personal encounter of God's love remain in church. If young adults do not find the church relevant, they do not attend. There are doctrinal/ lifestyle conflicts as well, but it is important to consider that these conflicts may be symptoms of deeper problems in the relationship between young adults and the church, and less about the rules themselves.

Part III

IN THEIR OWN VOICES: WHAT OUR RESPONDENTS SAY ABOUT CHURCH AND FAITH

4

FAITH DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

We sought in our semi-structured interviews to identify the faith drivers and faith barriers that respectively either lead emerging adults toward the church or drive them away from it.

Faith drivers are the conditions that positively correlate with church participation. Our research confirmed that parents usually have an integral role to play in the spiritual development and lasting faith commitment of their children – even into their adult years. Through our research, we also discovered that young people are drawn into deeper faith engagement when God is experienced – when he reveals himself to them. Next, we discovered that vibrant church community is very important for young adults to engage in their faith, and that the teachings and beliefs of the church must be engaging and empowering in order to capture the attention and gain the respect of twentysomethings.

"You need others to be able to sustain. So people say they are Christian and they do that alone. I mean, c'mon, really? How will you be able to be a Saint by yourself? You need others. I mean, alone? Like, really alone? I think its B.S." Merlynn

"I think that you can make your own way. I think that organized church is often really sh___y." Jill-Ann

Two young adults, two attitudes to the place of church in their spiritual lives.

Merlynn, a raised-Christian childhood attender, dropped out of church as a teenager after her military family went through a difficult geographical move. She didn't like the leadership at the new church, which had few younger people. Yet in her post-secondary years Merlynn reports having had a tangible spiritual experience and discovered a lively campus-based faith community that solidified her connection to the church.

Jill-Ann, a university student who was raised Christian, still attends faithfully despite her disappointments with the church. Her words may be offensive but we need not take offence at them. Her alienation is important and requires further consideration.

Jill-Ann's sentiment is common. Increasingly, young adults are making a distinction between Jesus and the church. In essence, they're saying that Jesus differs greatly from local congregations. They claim to be accepting Jesus while rejecting the church.

There appears to be a disconnect. Why do so many young adults claim to like Jesus and the things he stood for, but have an aversion to the church? In our research, we asked questions that would offer insight into this complexity.

Common justifications

Three common justifications for withdrawing from church participation came up again and again in our research. Here's what young people had to say:

"I'M TOO BUSY TO ATTEND"

Emerging adults are busy. They are learning to stand on their own. They are learning to keep a schedule, go to school, write papers, carry a job, pay bills, maintain an apartment, find a reputable auto mechanic and keep on top of their social lives. When all is said and done, there just isn't enough time for church. Or is there?

The thing is, in the midst of a busy season in life, people have to make a decision about what to prioritize and what to lay aside. Why do young adults choose to let go of church instead of partying, hooking up or sleeping in? Why do young adults seem to find these transitions more difficult than did the generations that came before them?

"I CAN DO FAITH ALONE"

Many emerging adults profess they love Jesus but not the church. They believe that being a part of a congregation is optional. As one person put it, "being a Christian has nothing to do with whether you go to a church. Being a Christian is who you belong to."

Many young adults argue they grow in faith just as much, or even more, by reading their Bibles and praying at home as they would if they attended church. Others argue for a new definition of church: "It doesn't necessarily have to be a church in a building. It could be just a group you meet up with, it doesn't have to be a set time, I just think they need to be involved in some sort of activity in which they're with fellow believers, just to challenge them and to grow and to have support and community."

What is it about the historical structure of church that turns some young people off? Why do they feel the need to redefine church? Again, it's important to tap into the underlying reasons for this justification.

"GOING TO CHURCH IS POINTLESS AND NOT WORTH THE EFFORT"

The vast majority of non-attenders say that church is pointless and not worth the effort. For many of them, church is just an "empty obligation" or a "routine." The returns are of little value compared to the investment required.

This raises several questions. Why is church seen to be so dreadful? Why did church attendance come to be seen as a transaction in which young adults feel they should be compensated for their efforts?

First step: diagnosis

On the surface, it appears that young people simply have too much to do in their lives; they still like Jesus and meeting with other Christians, but they don't really like tradition. They've attempted to participate in church but it failed to meet their needs, thus making it "pointless" and "not worth their effort." The significant implication of this is that the point of church is for church to meet one's needs.

It's tempting to listen to the concerns of Canada's young people and begin working hard to meet their professed needs and expectations. When we take time to hear their voices, however, it's important for us to discern why young adults come to the conclusions they do. In the same way that a patient goes to his doctor with a list of symptoms and the physician uses them to discern the problem and recommend a helpful treatment plan, young adults provide us with an understanding of their church experiences. It is our job to discern the underlying factors at work and recommend an effective response.

Protecting their voices

This part of the report is about the factors that encourage young adults to participate in church and the factors that keep them away.

To understand the emerging generation, we have to put aside our desire for straightforward answers and learn to be comfortable with the complex and even contradictory nature of young adults. There is nothing simple about them. We must try to hear the message behind what they are saying.

We've done our best to represent our interview participants as accurately as possible. In this part specifically, we do that by providing you with their voices more than our interpretations.

Four factors in church and faith participation

The young adults we surveyed electronically provided us with their feelings on a number of important attitudinal statements having to do with the church or Christian faith. For each statement, participants were asked to select whether they agreed strongly, agreed, disagreed or disagreed strongly. Their answers reveal to what extent each factor bears on whether or not young people engage in faith and/or church. These are the areas that are most prominent, and we are going to explore them through the voices of the young adults with whom we had previously done qualitative interviews (see Appendices).

Here's what we found. The factors that drive church involvement and the barriers against church involvement fit within four themes, each of which will be explored in turn in the chapters that follow:

- Parents
- Experience of God
- Community
- Teaching and beliefs

5

PARENTS

The faith commitment of parents strongly influences the faith and church participation of their children – even into their adult years. Faith is "sticky."[45] Our study confirms that emerging adults raised by parents who attend church regularly, pray regularly and read their Bible regularly are far more likely to attend church faithfully as adults than their peers with parents who do not engage in these spiritual practices on a regular or semi-regular basis (see chapter 9).

This suggests that to a large extent, faith is passed on from one generation to the next. Whatever parents do, their children are likely to do also. Parents have an integral role to play when it comes to modeling and teaching religion.[46]

Modeling

By modeling, we mean the practices that parents engage in primarily for the sake of their own faith and from which their children benefit by observing. It's a matter of setting an example. Here's how a number of the young adults we interviewed described the fruit-bearing faith practices of their parents:

"Our faith had to be our own, like it was never 'We are Christian, so you are going to be a Christian,' but we are Christian and are going to show it by how we live." Gary

"Like I saw my mom every day, I'd come down and she'd be on the couch sitting in the morning, reading her Bible in the quiet. Or like, I'd always see her flipping through her Bible when she had free time from not having to run around and do stuff. So she was very open to talking about it, and she talked to me about it a lot. " Anna

"My parents were not only Christians but were involved in the community, just as their parents were in their parishes ... so I always saw my parents participate in the choir, my father was pastoral agent for a few years so participation in the life of the church is something that always seemed natural." Chloe

"There was always a Bible around. She would get up in the morning and read it. Um, and she had a journal and she would write things that she learned, she would take notes in the sermon. Um, and I started doing that, too." Sydney

"I got a lot of my faith from my mom. She's always been a great witness to my faith – a quiet witness. She didn't participate in any women's group or Bible study groups ... but somehow she just kinda – her faith was – was just such a testament to God's love for us." June

"My parents are role models. They have a lot of faith and are very confident in God but also open to surprises. It is not really faith in a mold ... My family likes to organize big affairs for God, we're not really the type to talk of God a lot or to teach a lot on God but we exhort ourselves to live our lives constantly fulfilled through him. Faith in action, that's what my family represents." Emma

[45] Powell and Clark, *Sticky Faith.*

[46] This is supported by a large body of research having to do with religious retention. See, for example, Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2005); Christian Smith and David Sikkink, "Social Predictors of Retention in and Switching from the Religious Faith of Family of Origin," *Review of Religious Research* 45.2 (2003): 188–206; Scott Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858–866.

"And my mom who lived it, like, I would see her reading her Bible every night and praying. And I knew that her relationship with Jesus was something that was real … I think seeing how real my mom's relationship with the Lord was, did, and continues to really challenge me and inspire me to consider the way that I live." Jasmine

"My father reads his Bible every day. Sometimes he will read the same verse over and over again for a week until he feels it's really seeped into his heart. He spends another half hour praying." Don

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:
- My parents model a love for church, prayer and Scripture.
- My parents are changed by their time with God.

By contrast, parental spiritual disengagement takes on a variety of appearances. For example, one parent, but not the other, may participate in faith and church; parents may believe in God and even engage in private faith practices but not attend church; or parents may attending church but not participate in faith practices throughout the week. Here's how a number of church-leavers described the lack of modeling in their homes:

"The whole like living God, going to church kind of thing is just usually me and my mom, and my dad stays home." Colleen

"Not really much, umm, [my dad] sometimes would come with us on Christmas, sometimes not, but definitely not every week. We wouldn't really, yeah, wasn't really a big part of his life at all." Bill

"Simply, we were a churchgoing family, but not a family that truly believed or lived out according to how we believed. We simply went to church and we tried to do some religious things, but in the end we didn't really – wouldn't get it and it wasn't passed on to me." Jeremy

"Umm … it was, it was a very big part of my growing up, but did we talk about it all that often? No." Lois

"No conversations. My parents prayed before dinnertime when we sat together. Eventually we stopped doing that because my sister was always gone and I had discovered television, so I would just eat elsewhere. So they would pray together, but that was pretty much it." Don

"He called himself a Christian but his life didn't produce any fruit … He can recite Bible verses and verses from hymns, and he will also put them in birthday cards and things like that. Um, but I found that he behaved in a way that did not, in any way, reflect what I felt to be right." Sydney

"He was usually the one who took us to church. Umm, and he's kind of a guy, take it to church, keep it at church, go home." Devon

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:
- People shouldn't just go through the motions without actually believing.
- It's not enough to go to church if you're going to behave inappropriately the rest of the time.

PRACTICE FOR APPEARANCE'S SAKE

Though many families are very engaged in faith practices, some of the young adults we interviewed considered these activities to have been carried out simply for appearance's sake. Some young adults saw their families doing the right things but not necessarily for the right reasons. In describing the faith practices they observed during their upbringing, these young people used words like "ritual," "routine" and "tradition" – and these terms were all used in a negative sense. That is, for some it wasn't a matter of letting faith guide their lives, but rather of upholding tradition without a reason.

"The only time we were ever religious was when we went to church on Sunday, that was it." Sandi

"I think that my family was Roman Catholic just because my family was Roman Catholic; I don't think that they actually were Roman Catholic. I don't think they actually practiced it or anything like that." Janice

"To go to church, that was part of the routine." Ashley

"We were all like, status quo. We'd all attend Mass together on a weekly basis, and then we'd all pray, not together, but we'd all pray daily, but nothing beyond that." June

"Umm, religion was talked about kind of casually, if it came up, it came up, and we talked about it … we never really did any religious practices as a family, I don't think. We just more stuck to family traditions that we liked." Alvin

"I'd say faith experience at home to a degree was kind of superficial. I think that my parents just thought that it was a good thing to be, like my mom was raised going to church so she thought that it was good for us to be raised going to church." Malcolm

"I don't know if my parents had much in the way of faith. I think I sort of thought faith was sort of the – I don't even know what to call it – but … it was sort of an abstract feel-good type of thing." Ned

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:
- People shouldn't just go to church and do religious things without "getting it."
- People shouldn't just attach a religious label because of tradition.
- People should do more than just pray before meals.
- People shouldn't just follow the status quo and keep faith in the background.

Instructing

By instructing, we mean instances where parents explicitly pass on their faith. This typically doesn't take the form of a sit-down talk (which many young adults would describe as a lecture); the most effective faith instruction often takes place organically, through a culture of gospel-centred living in the home. The gospel is applied to all areas of life throughout the day, parents are willing to answer children's faith questions, and children are invited to participate in faith practices alongside adults. Here's what a number of young adults have to say about the way they were instructed in faith:

"Especially my dad has always been someone who speaks very openly about his faith and enjoys having conversations with pretty much anyone, and especially his children … He's someone who I always felt comfortable going to when I wanted to have a conversation or raise an issue or had a question, and he was always good about just being willing to discuss it with me, and being willing to take a deeper look at Scripture if it was needed." Randi

"My mom … all of her encouragements often tied very closely into the Lord." Jenny

"When I was home, in terms of my mom, we continued intercessory prayer with my mother. She wouldn't have just intercession by herself. My sister and I, the three of us would be praying, and I can see ourselves feeling the Holy Spirit. It was really great." Edna

"My dad was always reading his Bible. He did devotions with the family, always prayed, like you know, every time there was a crisis he'd be like, 'We need to stop and pray about this … In church he was very involved." Sylvia

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:
- My parents speak openly about their faith and invite dialogue.
- My parents include us in faith practices.

Young people benefit from parents who are intentional about passing on their faith to their children. Children don't want to be preached at, but they enjoy opportunities to engage in faith-centered dialogue, the chance to ask questions, and being included in the practices of their parents. Even if they do not participate in everything, they usually benefit from the invitation. When parents don't practice their faith regularly, on the other hand, or appear to be just going through the motions, their children's faith life generally suffers.

Sometimes another older Christian taking an interest in a young adult assumes a quasi-parental role (see chapter 7), while to Catholics, the priest is a father figure. Parents and parental figures have a crucial role to play in passing on their faith to their natural or spiritual children.

6

EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Today's emerging adults tend to want the real deal – immediately! Having grown up with interactive technology and fast-food culture, they often find it difficult to accept a belief without tangible evidence. They want to see it, hear it, smell it, touch it, or taste it, not because they necessarily trust empirical evidence, but because they trust themselves.

Members of today's emerging generation want to experience God in a very tangible and personally meaningful way. Many want God to answer their prayers in their way and according to their timing. They want to hear him, be touched by him and see him – or at least evidence of him.

Merlynn, a French Catholic young woman, had such an experience. Shortly after developing "bi-polar symptoms" and having "a huge breakdown" she visited a best friend. During this visit she tangibly experienced a divine, empowering, presence.

"My best friend at the time … when I was 18 … she became a nun…. I stayed in touch with her mom…. I really liked her and she would talk about God and I was like, I'm not really interested, but I would listen anyways and I really like her. So what happened, she said, 'Go see [best friend].'… So I go there and there's like [spiritual] signs everywhere like parallels with all my life, so … I wanna go pray…. So I'm in front of Jesus, the Eucharist, the blessed sacrament, and it fell on me like a ton of bricks, oh my God, what am I doing here? There's something going on. There's something here. The presence…. So, I got, like, conversion …. I came out of it and I had so much fire." Merlynn

After a six-year absence, Merlynn returned to church and faith following this encounter.

It is not enough just to hear the positive faith stories of others. Twentysomethings typically want to experience Jesus for themselves. They need to know that God is present and cares about them. They know this when their prayers are answered and God's presence is tangible to them. This of course presents a challenge, given that God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8).

Unfortunately, some young adults genuinely search for God and feel they come up empty-handed. One person we interviewed described his search for God like this: "It was kinda, you know, a big separation between someone way off there but not someone here you could get to know." Another person put it this way: "I had hoped that God was there but I don't think that I ever felt like he was." We listened to many stories of disappointment with God in which he was described as impersonal, absent, inattentive, far-away, unfelt, disconnected, lacking and even altogether non-existent.

Does God answer my prayers?

Christian churches teach that God faithfully answers prayer – not always in our timing or in our way. Some young adults therefore wait attentively for God to come through for them in the midst of difficult circumstances. Answered prayers are linked to greater church attendance. When young adults perceive their prayers being answered, they are drawn into deeper relationship with Christ and greater faith commitment. This is especially true when prayers are answered in the midst of hardship. Here's a sampling of the life-altering answers to prayer reported by the Canadian young adults in our survey:

"My family went through a pretty hard time with a lot of sickness and stuff and a lot of their prayers were answered … My uncle had cancer a few times, and my grandpa had just passed away of cancer.

So, it was pretty fresh in our family … So, if there was a time when I felt like God was most around, I guess it would be then." Erika

"I had tendinitis in my left wrist and I got prayed for at church and it went away in a few days. It was a positive experience." Stella

"I was really depressed. I started to pray a lot again, to get this out of me. I don't want to feel this way anymore. And I didn't. So after that it's like, okay, God exists – set in stone." Devon

"My sister when she was 17 had a stroke and lost vision in her eye … The pastor at the church went to the hospital regularly to be with her and pray with her and after he prayed with her a number of times she was actually healed – her vision returned … it was an answer to prayer." Malcolm

"I know that God provided for me … I continue to choose to believe that there were times when my family needed money, when I personally needed money, and I prayed and I got it somehow. I always had what I needed." Sydney

"If I ask God to direct me in a certain way and then the next day or a few days after that I would find an answer and I'd be like, wow, you were listening kinda thing." Renita

"You are gonna laugh … someone asked us to pray for a fish, 'cause it was floating … so we closed in prayer … and the fish started swimming everywhere again … It was awesome." Sandi

"Jim's battery was dead, so I was praying, God start this car. Bam! The car started." Devon

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- God comforts my family in difficult times.
- God heals people.
- God provides for my family and me.
- God guides me.
- God cares about little things.

Many young people who regularly engage in prayer expect God to answer. As happens too with their older peers, they may expect him to answer their way and in their timing. Unfortunately, many believe that only two options exist when God does not answer their prayers in the way they expect. Either God exists and doesn't care for them, or God does not exist at all. The first option causes disappointment and pain, while the second offers them a way to let go of their disappointment and pain; in many cases, in the absence of other explanations, young adults choose to stop the pain by deciding God does not exist. It's especially difficult for young people to trust that God is good and caring when their prayers seem to go unanswered in times of hardship:

"My aunt and a couple of friends died of cancer and , you know, praying for them to come through … you're praying for a miracle to happen and it doesn't, you know, it kind of, I don't want to say question, but kind of makes you take a step back and say, these were kind of good people. Why did it have to happen to good people? But that's life, you know, as a human being." Tom

"When my cousin committed suicide it impacted me…. And it hurt because God – everyone always said when you're younger that God will always be there for you. How can God take someone away that you care so much about? How can he let that happen?" John

"Well, my father passed away, and … that was it for me. That was it…. I was so angry at what I thought, or what I believed, to be God." Elsie

"I was praying and really waiting on God and didn't really feel that there was a lot there. But I continued with all the actions because that's what you're supposed to do. Disappointment." Jill-Anne

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Unanswered prayers mean that God doesn't care about people.
- Unanswered prayers mean that God doesn't care about me.
- Unanswered prayers mean that God doesn't exist.

During our face-to-face interviews many young adults told us of walking away from church and faith after the death of a loved one, parental divorce, loss of employment, failure in school, unplanned pregnancy, or any of numerous other life trials. These respondents shared that they prayed for help, comfort, relief, healing, or provision, but they felt that God did not come through for them.

Can I feel God's presence?

Nearly all the young adults who have continued to attend church say they've experienced God's love for them personally. They've felt him. Even though many of those we talked to said it was difficult to describe God's presence, they did their best to convey their experiences to us.

"And for the first time ever I really felt like God was speaking to me … and I prayed to him and I think for the first time finally accepted what he had done for me. So finally I received his forgiveness, instead of like, begging for it." Jeremy

"I would just get really blown away by nature … just by seeing the sun a certain way, or something like that … it would just really be like a miracle to me." Marly

"Just seeing how he works in relationships, and not just in like intimate relationships but every relationship. Like how he can develop a trust with someone between two people … I didn't do anything but all of a sudden [people] were pouring their hearts out to me." Martin

"I was at a youth rally and we were doing praise and worship and I was totally in the worship and I remember feeling God's presence … God was speaking, I was singing, I was praising, it was awesome." Sylvia

"I went to summer camp and just remember having a moment where it was an emotional moment where I realized that I needed this and I wanted it to be deeper. I wanted faith to be deeper." Hennie

"I woke up one morning at like 4 in the morning … and felt like I was supposed to go in and tell the gas station attendant that God loved him, that he was there for him. I ended up going in and saying that and he had written his suicide note that night and was going to go kill himself after shift. The guy became a Christian and turned his life around." Sandy

"I don't know how to describe it, I feel like he is very gracious, it's more than luck … I have a good life." Alison

"And the song starts off as chains be broken, lives be healed, as the yoke-man, Christ is revealed. And I just knew at that moment that's all I wanted. I just wanted all these chains to be broken and I just wanted that relationship." Melissa

"I'd call it a comforting presence … I was struck with awe about who God is." Mark

"Daily devotions were something that was really important to me and journaling … and in those times I would often hear the voice of God and be able to communicate with him." Randi

"I ended up drinking too much and going to the hospital. I woke up the next day in the bed of my house with no idea how I got there wearing just my underwear and a T-shirt, a hospital bracelet and electrodes on my chest and I'm like, okay, what did I do? … That was where a switch got hit … and from then on I decided." Malcolm

"It was at that point that God went looking for me, seized me. I started reading the Bible for real to pray for real, to see life as if God exists for real. At that time I was amazed to see that, yes, he does exist." Taylor

"I looked for every way to avoid [having sex with my girlfriend] and just couldn't ... I felt incapacitated where I felt I had this tangible sense of brokenness and this sort of overwhelming despair. And so I just cried out, 'Jesus, I'm destroying this girl, and I'm destroying myself, and it feels like you're saying that I shouldn't do this, but I can't help it. So if you want something to change, you have to change me, 'cause I've got nothing.' I woke up the next morning and something shifted inside of me. All of a sudden I had this resolve and this clarity that I needed to break up with this girl, despite the fact that I was still crazy about her. And I did." Ned

"After being dumped by my boyfriend I attempted suicide and in that dark place I became profoundly aware of God's presence ... It wasn't any of the things I had expected ... It was weird because intuitively, internally I knew it was the presence of God and yet it did not fit any of my previous expectations like having." Barry

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- God speaks directly to me.
- God heals my heart.
- God reveals himself in nature.
- God is seen in people.
- God is felt during worship.
- God is experienced in emotion.
- God is found in serving others.
- God demonstrates himself by giving me guidance.
- God shows himself in the midst of hardship.

Churches teach that God reveals himself in many different ways. Empirically, personal encounters with him are associated with greater church commitment. God's presence is validated for many young adults through answered prayers.

Others say they are disappointed because they haven't been "touched" by God. They want to feel him. The witness of the church and Scripture doesn't satisfy this need. They express a desire to experience God through their senses and on their own terms. Interestingly, most of the people we interviewed weren't able to nail down what it means to feel God. Many were able to offer suggestions, however. One young adult said that he was looking for "a real presence, like a spiritual presence." Another explained that feeling God meant she would experience "a real presence and that, you know, Jesus was in [her] heart, and the Holy Spirit was there." Another young adult confessed that her expectations were hard to explain but she would just know when it happened.

Despite being unable to explain what God's presence feels like, many young adults seem to be certain of what it means to experience his absence. In fact, so much so that they're willing to walk away from faith when they feel God has not made himself visible or they have not been able to feel him.

"We can get that out of the way right now. Nothing spiritual happened in my childhood – ever." Carl

"I don't know. I've never felt anything. No connection." Arlen

"[I've never felt anything] in relation to God. Any time I'm with a group and singing I have a very – I cry easily – and singing some of the songs sometimes and hearing everyone behind you, it just – that tears me up but I wouldn't relate it to a God experience." Suzanne

"I know there was one summer that I started, you know, praying and really waiting for God and didn't really feel that there was a lot there. But I continued with all the actions, because that's what you're supposed to do.... I never found it a particularly meaningful time." Jill-Anne

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I've never experienced anything spiritual.
- I've never connected with God.
- I haven't felt God, just emotion.
- I pursued God by doing the right things and came up empty-handed.

Many young adults have been taught they will encounter God when they engage in particular practices. They are trying but often come away disheartened.

The emerging generation tends to see God in answered prayers and concrete encounters – that is, in experience. When young adults do not experience the answers to prayer that they are looking for or do not feel they have experienced God, they are left feeling disappointed and may say they have been failed by God. For many, the level of disappointment they experience is enough to persuade them to leave church and faith.

7

COMMUNITY

There is a strange paradox that arises when it comes to young adults and community. The emerging generation is fiercely independent and self-reliant. Yet its members say there's nothing more important to them than friendship.[47] They crave relationship and long for a place of belonging. Unfortunately, many young adults don't consider the church to be that place for them. In their perception, God isn't actually the problem; the church is the problem. According to Carol it was "the institution itself" that made it difficult for her to continue engaging in the Christian faith.

Young adults are looking to make connections and find a place of belonging. They are attracted to church communities with as few "contaminants" as possible. In short, they are looking to be part of a dynamic movement rather than a stagnant institution. To understand what is meant by this, it's best to break community into two parts: its function and its ethos.

Function

When we talk about the function of community, we are talking about the role it plays in people's lives. Young adults were clear about what draws them in.

Dynamic community means

- Growth in Christ
- Helping in the midst of hardship
- Leading people through emotional healing
- Equipping people to function in their talents
- Making a difference in the community

GROWTH IN CHRIST

If young adults are going to church, they expect to grow in their relationship with Christ. It's tempting to think that this is the job of the pastor and accomplished mostly through preaching, but it's not. The entire congregation has a role to play. In fact, the vast majority of those we interviewed reported that relationship with people in the congregation was far more instrumental to their spiritual growth than the sermons. When it comes to growing in Christ, mentorship is key.

"I entered into a deeper place, or relationship with Jesus because I experienced fellowship, I was in Bible studies, my prayer life increased … And then whenever I wanted to I could see a spiritual director for confession … I go to church on Sundays so that I can receive Christ in body, right? – through communion. And that's the thing that I value the most because, although sometimes I don't feel the transformation I know it's taking place. Like I know through that I have Christ within me." June

"[The church is there] to help you when you falter and when you stumble … and help you to worship God and help you to nourish your faith." Martin

[47] Reginald Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation Is Responding to Change and Choice* (Lethbridge, AB: PC Books, 2009), 25.

"The choir director from the church – we would keep in contact and she would always call me and check up on me and encourage me in my faith, and another elder in the church would call and walk with me, advise me to keep having faith and knowing that God's there." Renita

"There's a lot of encouragement from within the church and people who just took me in, I guess, as another kind of son and nurtured me in my faith and helped me to grow." Martin

"But, the youth pastor was a very affirming person and his wife, when I was fourteen, asked if she could mentor me … her relationship with me was one of the most significant things that I experienced because she showed me that I was valuable, at a time when I didn't feel that way. She showed me that she loved me and that demonstrated God's love for me." Jasmine

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Fellowship with other Christians helps me grow in Christ.
- Studying the Bible with others helps me grow in Christ.
- Spiritual direction helps me grow in Christ.
- Receiving communion helps me grow in Christ.
- Being mentored by a member of my congregation helps me grow in Christ.

Good preaching and formal church practices are helpful when it comes to spiritual growth, but the key is found in relationship. Young adults who want to grow in their understanding of and reliance on Christ are typically not interested in a list of tasks or disciplines. They need people to walk alongside them for the sake of faith development. This often takes place through small group interactions and mentorship.

HELPING IN THE MIDST OF HARDSHIP

Many young adults report that the church is meant to be a place where people can go to find help when hardship hits. It is a place where people run to find care, comfort and stability in the midst of difficult circumstances. When the church responds with open arms and affectionate care, people's lives are changed. People's faith grows and their desire to attend and be part of a local congregation increases.

"The pastor realized my mother was a single mother and he came alongside and encouraged us … there were two pastors that would be there for us. It was amazing." Edna

"I was bipolar … The priest was following me. He helped me a lot to focus on what I'm doing and he helped me to stay in school and finish my diploma." Samuel

"I got so depressed. I couldn't do anything. I couldn't work. I couldn't leave the house. It was awful … My friend invited me to church … So I started crying because I realized that I hadn't been with God for like 6 years … My friend is like, you should go to confession … I came out of it and I had so much fire and I had so much fun and laughed. I hadn't laughed like that in months." Merlynn

"And I started to become really, really depressed in university and addicted to sex and suicidal and … not really knowing how to get out of this and really feeling hopeless and not really wanting to live. And umm, I had some good friends that were Christians, and thankfully they were friends with me and they kept me going." Jeremy

"[My best friend] passed away. It was an unexpected heart failure. I mean that hit me pretty hard … [My pastor] was one of the main people that I was able to talk to about it and I mean, he really, he acted as a sounding board … just kinda helped me sort through feelings and showed that people can make a big difference." Alvin

"It's like I can't see God but I see this person and they can see God and because I trust them, I can hold on long enough until God gets here for real. I know that they're not going to lie to me and it's not just them saying God is right there. How they live and treat me is physical proof that God exists … they literally were Jesus with skin on to me and in a world where I believe God hated me they were physical proof of a loving God that I could not see or access on my own." Barry

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- The church offered support and encouragement.
- The church helped me stay in school and finish my diploma.
- The church walked me through confession.
- The church offered hope and kept me going.
- The church acted as a sounding board and helped me sort through my feelings.
- The church was Jesus to me.

Emerging adulthood is a tumultuous time in people's lives. There is often a need for increased help and support from pastors and lay people. When the church comes through by offering tangible assistance, young people are encouraged and drawn in.

LEADING PEOPLE THROUGH EMOTIONAL HEALING

Many of the young adults we talked to have been walked through emotional healing by a church. Their lives have been radically changed.

"In the midst of the brokenness and the things that were happening, God put people into my life to speak words of truth, and restoration, and healing." Jasmine

"Um … well my home life wasn't very good. My parents fought all the time … I was a very sad girl … To be honest, I became promiscuous – I was looking for love … so then I started drinking and I just lived a life that was completely opposite of what the church expected, and thankfully at that point I had people in my life that [pointed it out] and I was thankful to meet some counsellors that were really effective and … I was able to turn my life around." Allana

"So I started working through counselling at that point, I started working through my abuse … the counselling I received in those two years, like, they healed huge gaping wounds in my heart. They didn't make me straight, but they healed huge gaping wounds in my heart and gave me the capacity to begin working in other areas of my life and began to heal this picture of God where I thought God was up there always angry at me and I began to be able to see that God could love me even if I was gay … What an earth-shattering transformational understanding that came the day I could believe that God didn't hate me." Barry

"That's what I like, there was no judgment on us in our situation though they knew that (my girlfriend) hasn't known God for as long, but we still wanted to get married when we had the means and I never felt any judgment from them because of that. And that's why I really appreciate this church." Samuel

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- The church helped me heal by speaking words of truth, restoration and healing over me.
- The church helped me heal by gently pointing out my sin and helping me understand its root causes.
- The church helped me heal by providing a safe place where I could be honest about my pain and experience God.

Members of the emerging generation are looking to belong to a church where they can experience God in the areas of their deepest pain. They aren't necessarily looking for pat answers to their problems. In essence, they want to encounter Christ himself through the Bride of Christ, which is the church.

EQUIPPING PEOPLE TO FUNCTION IN THEIR TALENTS

Twentysomethings aren't looking to be pampered. They're looking to contribute significantly to the world around them – to be part of something bigger than themselves. They are drawn to churches that provide them with opportunities to function and grow in their gifts and abilities.

"I think they really formed me as a leader. I got lots of chances to lead. I still love working with kids and I think that's something that came from that time." Marion

"As a leader it was fantastic – we got to plan it. We had a lot of free rein, which I think was the best part. Like we always had someone supervising … So really the opportunity to be creative, and stretch your own self in terms of leadership." Sid

"I was involved in the youth group and helped teach Sunday school. I helped do worship, I helped run junior youth sometimes; I did drama skits in front of the church … I loved being plugged in in our church because it was a family and it was a way of being involved in that family of Christ." Martin

"When [my youth pastor] would go on trips to speak he would take one of us … And he gave me the night that we did at McMahon Stadium, so I got to speak at McMahon Stadium in front of all these kids. That left quite an impression on me – a 17-year-old kid – that he would give me that opportunity." Roy

"I was 22 years old, and basically by this point my pastor saw something in me and they wanted to draw it out … and just really started building into me and calling out qualities that he saw, and then giving me areas where I could be released in those gifts and talents. And so I began to thrive because I was given a space where I could use the gifts and abilities that I had." Randi

"I was growing my skills as a musician, and churches are very forgiving crowds to play in front of and they were always really complimentary and really enthusiastic about me." Alvin

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- It's important to me to be given an opportunity to lead.
- I need both guidance and autonomy.
- I need the freedom to be creative.
- I welcome being challenged by church.
- I need to be given a choice of serving in different ways.
- I need to be encouraged by church leaders.
- I need support from the congregation.

The young people we talked to want to know they have a valuable role to play in the life of their congregations. They want the opportunity to use their God-given talents for the sake of their church. But they don't want to serve tirelessly without thanks, and they refuse to serve in a place where their talents will be hampered or scrutinized. Thoughtful, prayerful encouragement can help them flourish.

Members of the emerging generation want to be part of something bigger than themselves. They want to know that their gifts and talents are valuable and appreciated and can be used to advance an organization or movement. Whether it's serving locally or abroad, they want to be agents of change.

Unfortunately, not all churches believe in equipping and releasing young people to serve in their areas of gifting and talent. Some congregations ignore the voice of their young and neglect to give them a meaningful role to play in the life of the church. Others give young people a chance but quash their creativity by keeping too tight a rein on them. We interviewed a number of young adults who were "turned off" by experiences like these.

"I put myself out there, and I had new ideas, and shared them. But nothing was being received, or, um, accepted. It wasn't that they said, no, you can't do that, it was just that nothing ever really happened with my ideas. Nobody gave me a job. I became a youth leader but, but I wasn't allowed to put in my creativity or my experience." Sydney

"Eventually it was just so much pressure to do it properly, and it wasn't from my peers at all, it was more from the adults. And if they didn't like the way you led worship they let you know, so it was really discouraging a lot of the time. And there was a lot of guilt associated with it, because you were in that position and you couldn't provide what the congregation wanted, or whatever it was." Carol

"I think I was maybe 17 at the time and everybody else was considerably older and I just kind of felt out of place and not able to relate. My job was to bring the youth aspect to the group, but it was kind of hard to relate the youth mentality to an older generation 'cause some of them were just set in their ways and didn't have any room to budge or learn something new from the youth aspect." Tom

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I was given a place to serve, but my voice and creativity were ignored.
- There was so much pressure to do it properly that joy was replaced with guilt.
- They asked me to speak, but they didn't listen.

Some young adults feel their talents and abilities are ignored altogether. Others are given an opportunity to serve, but when their involvement is critiqued, they lose the joy they once found in serving. Others still feel their voices are muffled by the aged who are unwilling to consider the perspective of the up-and-coming adults in their church. All in all, many of these young people would say that church leaders and congregants don't care about them or at least care more about "pulling off" a program than the young people giving their time and energy to it.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

The emerging generation is passionate about social justice and caring for the people around them. Its members want to contribute significantly to the function and life of their congregations, but they also want to participate with their churches to contribute to the community at large. They are attracted to churches that care for their local communities and the world abroad. Listen in as a number of young adults share passionately about the opportunities they had to participate alongside their churches to make a difference in the world:

"Helping people and stuff I really liked that … We went on mission trips to the States and painted people's houses and at one point we went to a ghetto … Helping people is always a good thing and always makes you feel good." Marly

"We did a mission trip to the Dominican and we did a Bible study school and helped homeless people – we brought food, so that was actually a very uplifting and life-changing experience you know coming out of your comfort zone and being able to help people on the other side of the fence." Tom

"On Saturday we also go out and do volunteering. We'll do like a bottle drive to help like sponsor a child or something like that, or we will go help at the soup kitchen, or like something less big like that, like we'll just go help a couple that's stressed and needs a date because they have so many children. We'll do stuff like that, so we'll go clean their house." Devon

"We did things like street ministry … we would take our skateboards and go downtown and hand out food to the homeless, and give roses to the prostitutes on Valentine's Day … We wanted it to be hands-on and tangible, we weren't satisfied just sitting." Sandy

"I love how our church is active and involved in the community. Even to the point where we're well-respected in the community, and people even, when they find out that we're with the Salvation Army church in town, when they're about to close the door, they'll open it to us. So I just love the idea that we're not an inward-focused church, but that we're involved in our community." Roy

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Helping people is always good and it's enjoyable.
- Local and overseas service projects are both important.
- Serving others helps them, but it also helps build relationships with others in the church.
- Faith needs to be applied in a way that is tangible and hands-on. People should serve others.
- It's essential to be an outward-focused church.

Many young adults get excited about serving. It makes their faith tangible and brings them joy. They want to be empowered and released to serve the broken people around them. But they don't want to go alone. They want to know they have the backing of their congregations. They want to serve as a team.

Yet young adults expressed impatience when people in church failed to follow through. From church leavers we heard sentiments such as these:

"I just saw so much talk and so many sermons about the good we should do, but yet I didn't see a whole lot of action from the church. Like, if you would go to a conference or to church, they would talk about all these things that we should do, but you never – you just go home and nothing would happen." Roy

"I felt it was somewhat hypocritical ... like being in church and saying these things and then not acting, not acting in Christian ways." Marly

Key Viewpoint of Young Adults:
- Church is full of people that talk a lot but actually do very little.

Ethos

The ethos or feel of a church is one of the things young adults care about most. One person put it this way: "You can have the best preacher and the best sermons and stuff, but if people don't feel welcome, I mean, it's not a very good church; there's a lot of stuff to work on." Emerging adults have an affinity to churches that show:

- Cross-generational support
- Authenticity
- Inclusivity

CROSS-GENERATIONAL SUPPORT

Many young adults are drawn to churches where they can easily engage in cross-generational relationships. It's not difficult to understand why when we consider the fact that many young people come from broken families, are often far away from home, and find themselves having to navigate through life with a new level of responsibility. Even though they long for independence, they also crave the warm affection, listening ears and wise words of the people that have gone before them.

Some of those we interviewed spoke very positively of their interactions with the older adults in their congregations. They want to glean from their wisdom, benefit from their encouragement, be blessed by their prayers, and be challenged by their words of accountability. Here's a sample of what they had to say:

"One thing I really liked about the church, there was the older people too, because they are really encouraging and invested in our lives, which is really good." Marion

"Some of those ladies in that back row ... pray for me every single day ... there's a genuine investment. The two old ladies that ran the church library that I would go hang out with every Sunday and who would always ask how I was doing just loved me like a grandson." Barry

"Those people became kind of like my adoptive aunt and uncles and they would always give me devotional books and sit down and have a talk with me, things like that." Carol

"There were several older members of the congregation ... They had this genuine interest in me." Ned

"There was this old lady and she gave hugs to everybody. That was really welcoming and stuff. And then all the older ladies walked around and just said hi to everybody to see how they were doing and stuff." Tia

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I really benefit from the life investment of the older generation.
- Church wouldn't be the same without the encouragement of the older generation.
- The prayers of the older generation for me are invaluable.
- The genuine interest the older generation takes in me is crucial.

Many young adults are attracted to congregations composed of young and old alike. Young adults crave the wisdom that comes from the life experiences of the older generation, as well as their seasoned prayers and their meaningful words of encouragement. There can be something very pure and unselfish when they show physical affection or interest in a young person's life.

AUTHENTICITY

Based on our interview feedback, we could say that young adults want to belong to a church community that is kind, friendly or welcoming, but the truth is, if congregations engage in these practices but they are done for the sake of show, instead of authentically, they do more harm than good. Young adults call this hypocrisy. For this reason, we've decided to clump qualities like kindness, friendliness, and hospitality under the banner of authenticity.

For many young adults, to be authentic means to be real or genuine – true to one's self. To be authentic means that one is not hypocritical or fake – one's character is consistent at all times. Young adults are in search of a church composed (mostly!) of members that are honest and sincere. While authenticity is usually seen as a good, it should be emphasized it is a good because of the identity between the inner self and outer actions. It is more the faithful reflection of the inner self in outer action that is seen as good rather than the content of the self or the outer action. In the more positive embrace of authenticity, young adults are not interested in show. In short, they want ministers and church members to practice what they preach. In a more negative embrace of the idea of authenticity, young adults may prize faithfulness to themselves and their actions above all else, resulting in a kind of idolatry of self. Positive authenticity then eschews showiness and falsehood. Negative authenticity then maintains a faithfulness between the inner self and outward actions without the inner self necessarily being guided or restrained by anything like Scripture, tradition or loyalty to family.

Here is how the emerging generation describes authentic churches:

"They actually practice their faith and I mean, they're pretty real … You feel welcomed by those people." Merlynn

"I felt received and accepted, and he really wanted to make sure that I felt as though I had a home with this youth group and with him, and he made sure that I knew he was willing to put himself out there and sacrifice his time and money and whatever so that I felt appreciated." Don

"There was a homely feeling. Everyone got to know everyone. It just seemed like one of the more friendly churches, especially when you're new." John

"People talk to each other not because they had to on a Sunday morning, but because they were genuinely interested in each other – a pretty positive, healthy community." Sid

"And the church is very welcoming and simple, simplistic and very hospitable." Jeremy

"Everybody in the church was very nice and warm and supportive." Renita

"I felt really welcomed and I felt safe. They didn't ask questions … a very accepting place and I think that really helped me." Bill

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:
- People in church should actually practice their faith.
- People in church should be willing to sacrifice for the sake of another.
- People in church should want to know one another.
- People in church should sincerely care for each other.
- People in church should be genuinely welcoming and hospitable.
- People in church should be warm and supportive.
- People in church should be safe.

Young adults in our survey expressed irritation with people they perceive as superficial, those for whom an "all put together" appearance to the public conceals inner chaos.

"I'm glad to get rid of having to put on a show for people on Sunday morning … you know, who's wearing what, are they singing with everybody else, or did they go forward during the altar call after the service … So, I was glad to get rid of what I felt was superficial bulls__t. Quite frankly, that's what I called it then." Sydney

"Seeing people just going to church to go to church. You know, just seeing a lot of … just going through the motions and then their life is a total mess … I didn't feel these people were happy in their lives … I just felt it wasn't true, and one-hundred percent pure." Marly

"Everybody goes and puts on their best smile and everything is all right … but nothing is ever all right. Everyone has their problems – everybody. But people like to hide the ugly side of life from each other … If you can find a way to make the church less superficial – more power to you. It is one of the biggest problems … Ministers and church members hide. They go to church and are all happy and what have you and that's total sh__. Everyone has problems and you don't have to wallow in self-pity, but it doesn't mean you ought to be allowed to fake your way through life." Carl

Key Viewpoint of Young Adults:
- Church is full of superficial people that appear "put together," but their lives are really a mess.

Respondents appeared bewildered by the contradiction between the two sides of some church people's lives. In a church environment these people would appear pious, and outside it they were at best indistinguishable from the crowd. It seemed to our young adult observers that to these people Christianity was merely a label, not a way of life.

"I felt as though some Christians clearly had the wrong message, or didn't have the message at all. I felt as though Christianity had started to become a badge that you would put up to the heaven scanner and walk on in later but for now you could do whatever you wanted. I felt that's what people believed and I was shocked and appalled … I contemplated whether Christianity was right anymore … the church is full of hypocrites." Don

"I guess one of the things I really struggle with is how people can have a firm belief in God but they have a belief they follow but they can treat people so horribly at the same time when there's people out there that might not necessarily believe in God but they follow more true to his teaching and are more of a reflection upon Jesus and his character." Anna

"I remember just seeing again certain students … um … go to chapel and pray and worship and then they would leave there and become regular again. What I call regular you know, they would be cursing or doing things they shouldn't have been doing and I just wondered how … how could they live a double life?" Cal

"I was going out and umm, I would see all the people that I went to church with out with me, or out with other friends, but we would see each other … at the bars and all partying and getting drunk, and basically doing the same thing as me. And this was at the point in my life where I was kinda turned off from the whole faith thing, and I did not in any way, shape or form call myself a Christian." Lois

Key Viewpoint of Young Adults:

- Church is full of two-faced people that act "Christian" on Sundays but live totally different lives the rest of the week.

In short, young adults are tired of church members professing to believe in something they do not or pretending to be something they are not. They understand it's impossible to live perfect lives; they just want people to be real.

Today's young adults are calling the church to a high level of integrity and transparency. They are unimpressed by facades and showiness. They want to see the raw, unpolished side of people and they want that side of people to be welcoming and safe. In essence, they are calling the church to practice what it preaches. They want to be part of an authentic faith community.

INCLUSIVITY

Canada's young adults have grown up in a world directed by pluralism and even relativism. They have been taught to include everyone and tolerate all beliefs. To many of them, acceptance and inclusion are top priorities, so they want to belong to a church that thinks the same way.

To the emerging generation, being an inclusive faith community means offering a place of belonging to all people regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, education, etc. It also means offering a variety of church initiatives that cater to the needs of each life stage. For example, it's important for churches to offer youth and young adult programs. Inclusive church practices send the message that all people are valued and cared for. Here's what a number of young adults have to say:

"Ideally someone who doesn't know Christ should be able to go to a church and feel welcome anyways, you know. And I feel like that would happen in my church, I feel that, you know, people would get to know them and make them feel welcome." Bill

"People are very friendly and very inviting to new members … The church family is very inviting and they invite new people in on a regular basis. A lot of people come for the first time, end up becoming permanent members." Wayne

"We were able to be ourselves 100% without being judged in any way." Renita

"Yeah, I'm really, really glad for the community of people and the friends and just the acceptance – that I could just be whoever I was." Haley

"When you go you feel like you're part of a family and like you're at home and not judged." Hannah

"And so, I think that creates a very loving and welcoming atmosphere at our church. People are accepted for where they're at." Jasmine

"One thing that I love about our church is that we have homeless people attend, and we have doctors and lawyers attend. It's just like a vast conglomeration of people. There's not only certain types of people that come to this church … It's just this mixture of the absolute poor and the wealthy. But it works and people love each other." Roy

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Church should welcome new people, even non-Christians, and make them feel comfortable.
- Church should invite new people into the centre of community.
- Church should let people be themselves without judgment.
- Church should accepting people where they're at.
- Church should be home to all people regardless of their background or vocation.

Many young adults are drawn to churches that hold out open arms to all people, regardless of age, life stage, ethnicity, history, or lifestyle. They are concerned for themselves, but also for others. If they are well received by the church but there is a possibility that their friends will be judged or denied acceptance and inclusion, they are turned off. They are looking for a church that will readily accept and offer a place of belonging to all people.

Sadly, of course, not all will feel genuinely welcomed. When Hennie was asked about her reason for staying away from church, she stated, "I just don't trust. I don't trust that I'm going to be valued, or cared for."

Young people yearn for a church that helps people grow in Christ, helps people in times of need, leads people through healing, equips people to walk in their gifts and makes a difference in the community. When it comes to the ethos of the church, young people long to be part of a faith community that is multi-generational, authentic and inclusive.

Judgmentalism

Among many of today's young adults, tolerance is fundamental, equality is essential and acceptance is aspired for. It's no wonder that the emerging generation is turned off by people they perceive as judgmental.

To be judgmental is to call attention to a wrongdoing in someone else's life in a harshly critical or condemning way. Judgmental people may go so far as to state the punishment that people deserve for their error.

Many of the young adults we talked to were turned off by judgment toward those within the church as well as judgment toward those outside the church.

JUDGING THOSE WITHIN

Many Christians classify their judgments as accountability. They argue that we need to keep one another accountable within the church body. They are right in saying that there is a need for accountability in the church, but the young adults we interviewed believe accountability should be birthed out of a place of deep love and viewing others as Christ views them. A Christian may act judgmentally by criticizing out of a wrong motive or at the wrong time or out of a mistaken view of the person they are confronting. Often their aim is to degrade, not to restore.

"[I] dropped out because the people were annoying and judging – they would drink but then go to church and pretend they were perfect. But they would judge me for drinking and smoking or whatever … I was willing to admit to drinking and they judged me. Honesty was discouraged." Stella

"I didn't really want to deal with the questions and the stares and that type of thing, and the judgment which I knew that was coming … I wanted to avoid, so I completely stopped going to church once I found out I was pregnant, once I started showing." Lila

"They bring the hammer down, and they judge. I think judge is the key word there. Boom! You get judged. It's so easy in Christianity to – I don't want to say that it's so easy. It seems to me that the game is almost who can go the longest without publicly screwing up." Tyson

"I'll keep her name anonymous, but a girl in my life would tell me that because I hadn't prayed that special prayer or been dipped or anything like that I was going to hell. And there'd be people who were Christian kids in my life who would say, how would you expect to get to heaven if you're acting like that, or why should you get to heaven you're this, you're that, you do these things. And so for me that was what I was told God and Jesus was, and what they were all about. And so I said, well, they don't exist to me." Don

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Church is full of judgmental people that lash out at me for doing the same things they do.
- Church is full of judgmental people that condemn me for my mistakes.
- Church is full of judgmental people just waiting for the next person to screw up publicly.
- Church is full of judgmental people that tell me I'm going to hell.

JUDGING THOSE OUTSIDE

In addition to being irritated by churchgoers that judge other congregants, young adults are also perturbed by Christians that judge people outside the Christian faith. Many members of the emerging generation are committed to treating everyone equally and accepting all people no matter what.

"Umm, it's just when some people know about your problems, I just feel like they're like, oh, what are you doing here, like, you're not a full believer, you shouldn't be here, you shouldn't be praying, you shouldn't be doing this. It's just the way they would look at you or the way they look down their nose at you when you're open about your problems. And [church] should be somewhere you go and you're open about your struggles and problems and they should be accepting and talk me through it … it doesn't help to look down your nose upon someone who's already feeling bad about the doubts they have." Anna

"[At the Christian school I attended] I had a close friend of mine who had same-sex attraction, and somehow that it had gotten out … And so as retaliation … they spray-painted the inside of his locker pink. And then when I had taken his side and stayed his friend my locker was then sprayed black and then yellow as an address to my race." Don

"The way church members spoke about [homosexuals] completely turned me off. They were very hypocritical – not hypocritical, judgmental, sorry that's a good word – and I didn't like it at all because who are you to judge someone for something like that? Personally I think you should look at yourself, you know, pull the plank out of your own eye before you go for someone else's." Lois

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Church is full of judgmental people that look down their noses at non-churchgoers that are open about their problems.
- Church is full of judgmental people that chastise gays.
- Church is full of judgmental people that make a big deal about the problems of those outside the church but ignore their own.

The stories of those we interviewed reveal the level of damage that can occur when church members are experienced as judgmental. There can be a huge impact on the emerging generation's commitment to church and faith engagement. The aftermath ranges from people acquiring a sense of distrust, to giving up on the church, to ruling out the very existence of God. Emerging adults are looking to be part of a congregation that will accept people as they are and love them relentlessly.

Exclusivity

The church teaches that God created people with an innate yearning and need to belong. People want to be desired, pursued, valued and celebrated. They want to know that they are missed in their absence and appreciated in their presence. In short, they want to know there's a place for them.

Unfortunately, this longing isn't always met by the church. In fact, many of the young adults we talked to shared that they felt excluded in one capacity or another. Some felt excluded by church members, but most felt overlooked by the way church programs were structured or run. Here's what a number of those we interviewed had to say:

"I just felt like I had no place there, really." Lois

"After that the few things of youth group I went to I just found that it was selective and they didn't involve people as much and I think that's what turned me off and gave me a negative point of view towards youth group." Anna

"They stopped focusing on building relationships with the youth. I found like, the adults focused on what their needs were and pushed us aside and as we were getting older the church seemed to stay the same … They haven't adapted to the young people of this generation, of this era. They haven't adapted and so we got left behind." Lila

"When I had more trouble going to church, was when there was a change of attitude toward worship and you could not do it if you were not baptized, so they excluded me from the group and at the time I found it really hard to go to church and just be a spectator." Rosalie

"I did not feel wanted there at all, like this church is mostly filled with people who are Christian their whole lives, grew up in a Christian family. Their families are well off, they're well to do, and I come from this not-so-well-off non-Christian family. I was a bit of an outcast and I never felt other than being an outcast, pretty much when I was there." Sandi

"And what about people who are divorced, what about blended families … There are people who just don't fit into that formula, and I for example don't fit into that formula, so where's the place for us?" Haley

"But, one of the things I noticed about that was, everything was geared around the young married couples. It was a big church. Like, it was so irrelevant to me. So maybe what I've learned is that – I don't know – singleness is irrelevant." Hennie

"Everyone was invited to youth group and so my grade we obviously became friends. We had Christian guys, non-Christian guys – people on the fence – but we all became friends regardless. And then a couple years into it they split us up. They put all the non-Christian kids in a group together and all the Christian kids in a group together and split all those friendships up and I just thought that was really counterproductive. Here are all these kids coming here and you are supposed to be showing them Christ and you do that by isolating them and treating them harsher than the kids who are Christian and that really bothered me." Carl

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- The church doesn't offer me a place.
- The church is selective.
- The church doesn't give me a voice.
- The church makes me feel like an outcast.
- The church excludes those that don't fit the family formula.
- The church neglects to care for those that are single.
- The church segregates people unnecessarily.

Young adults are "turned off" of church by people, programs and practices that notice and account for certain individuals to the exclusion of others. In fact, young adults are so committed to the values of inclusion and acceptance that they don't just get annoyed for their own sakes. Sometimes their "beef" with exclusive church members and practices is motivated by empathy for others.

Failure

Many young adults leave church or faith because they feel they're consistently failing. Some report that they're failing God. Others simply can't live up to the expectations of other church members. For some, the feeling of failure becomes so intense that the only seemingly plausible solution appears to be abandoning church or Christianity.

Is God disappointed in me?

The emerging generation doesn't want to fail God. In fact, they'd rather walk away from church and faith altogether than feel as if they're not meeting God's expectations – or at least, what they understand to be his expectations. We've picked four key people to share their experiences.

Jasmine was taught that to be a good Christian she needed to read her Bible, pray and be happy. When she started to struggle with feelings of depression she began to think that God was displeased with her.

"I felt discouraged and all alone and just unable to line up to God's standards." Jasmine

While studying the Bible story of Daniel in the lion's den, Barry learned from his Sunday School teacher that God protects those he loves. Barry concluded that the opposite must also be true: God punishes those he hates. Since Barry's life was characterized by painful ridicule from peers and adult church members, he reasoned that God hated him and he was being punished.

"In some ways it would have been comforting to believe that God didn't exist because believing that God did exist and hated me was such a worse alternative, but that's where I ended up. So when I was in grade 8 I told God to f___ off and get out of my life ... and it wasn't actually that I didn't care about God and didn't wanna belong, but it deadens the pain in my own heart of the profound rejection from God that I had." Barry

Sylvia had been sleeping with her boyfriend for a number of years before feeling convicted. She didn't want to stop having sex but she felt she was failing God. Guilt overwhelmed her. To solve the problem, she discounted the existence of God.

"And then because I was doing my own thing, like I had a boyfriend and I was sleeping with him, and uh, we were having sex, and even just knowing that that was wrong in God's eyes, and you know, sort of making a decision that if God does exist I am not going to disobey him, so I'm just going to choose for him not to exist. It was easier for me to live with myself knowing that than it was living with myself and like, he does exist and he's going to forgive me but I'm just going to treat him like a jerk and not do the right thing." Sylvia

James was mentored by his youth leader to do devotions every day, which was an external rather than an internal motivation. Inevitably, James failed and became discouraged.

"You kinda lose track and then all of a sudden [your devotion to God] is just gone. And you realize, hey, I just failed myself. It's just so frustrating. You keep setting up standards for yourself. And then I couldn't keep the balance." James

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I wasn't able to live up to God's standards.
- I was punished and rejected by God because he hated me.
- I couldn't meet God's expectations so I dismissed his existence.
- I kept setting a standard for devotions but couldn't live up to it.

ARE OTHER PEOPLE DISAPPOINTED IN ME?

While many young adults leave the church under the pretense they have failed God, others leave because they feel they have failed people. They are being held to man-made standards they are incapable of meeting. They feel ashamed, guilty and even condemned when they are not able to please members of their congregations. For a time, many of these remarkable young people manage to hold up under the weight of expectations placed on them, expectations they find unreasonable, but eventually they become overwhelmed, discouraged and lifeless. They make a run for the door:

"Now that I've left church I don't feel that burden of guilt every time I slip up and make a mistake." Anna

"There was not specific negative experience I guess, but it was just the feeling- that feeling all the time of never being good enough." Carol

"All these demands were made of me, of what I needed to do and how I needed to perform, and I said, 'Forget it!'" Sandy

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I felt guilty every time I made a mistake.
- I never felt good enough.
- I couldn't meet the demands made of me.

Many members of the emerging generation are tired of trying to live up to the expectations of people. In an effort to live authentic, guilt-free and meaningful lives, they leave church. Yet when church lives up to its calling, it provides an unparalled community in which young adults can find spiritual growth, healing, and opportunities to serve God's people.

8

TEACHING AND BELIEFS

As mentioned earlier, sermons are less important to young adults than the sense of community in church, but they still have a significant impact on young adults' commitment to church participation. Many in the emerging generation are looking for churches that don't avoid tough topics, are willing to go deep, provide life applications and welcome questions.

At the same time, many young adults choose to disengage from church at least partly because of Christian teachings and beliefs. To them, what is right and wrong is a matter of personal opinion. You have the freedom to pick and choose which beliefs you want to engage in, and which ones you want to rule out. In their eyes, for the church to require its members to abide by a specific set of beliefs is repressive.

These young adults believe the church is an outdated institution with unrealistic expectations that can't be met by the emerging generation. They say that the church is out of touch with what's important in society and that its doctrines aren't helpful. Here Canada's young adults are most concerned about the church's expectations against sex outside marriage, the church's differentiation between male and female roles, and belief in ultimate truth.

Method of delivery

Many young adults are drawn to teaching that is readily applicable and challenging. They also want a chance to ask questions and wrestle with what they're being taught.

APPLICATION

Young adults often want the time they put into listening to a sermon to yield memorable points they can take away. They want to be drawn into the message and shown how it pertains to their daily lives. They especially appreciate it when the pastor is willing to share stories from his or her own life to illustrate how the sermon applies.

"He preaches in a way that helps you today. You can leave that church ... and adjust something in your life today." Tyson

"People have focused on how do we make this more engaging, how do we make this more real, how do we talk in ways that aren't just going through the whatever but we're actually speaking into people's lives, how can we look at things that are affecting people directly." Sid

"It's a reminder to live the gospel week-to-week again. Some churches don't preach it as well as ours does." James

"I love when a priest is going to give a realistic speech ... priests who are more in touch with how people live and they will build their messages based on people's lives." Ashley

"There's a part at the end where he would just tell like a story, it would be like a story relating to his life, so it was so interesting because you can relate because it's a real-life scenario and he would teach

you things. And it was so, it was like, I didn't just sit there and fall asleep, I actually was like so intrigued in what he was talking about." Janice

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I want to be given the tools to apply the teaching to my life immediately.
- I want to be reminded and shown how to live the gospel week-to-week.
- I want to learn how to apply the sermon to my life by listening to how it applies to others.

It's common for pastors to believe that making a sermon readily applicable requires them to "dumb down" the content of their message. Today's young people are saying this isn't the case. They want both. They are drawn to churches that preach the Word and show them how to apply the text to their daily lives. They especially enjoy pastors who transparently apply the text to their own lives in front of the congregation.

OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS

According to the majority of the young adults we interviewed, right and wrong are a matter of personal opinion. It makes sense, then, that it's important for them to have the opportunity to ask questions. They want to wrestle with what's taught to them and make a judgment for themselves. This is important both at home and in the church.

"I am at the age where you question everything and you start wondering why, and why me, and all that stuff." Sandi

"I like the style of preaching where they don't just preach to you, they pose questions to you, don't just tell you how you are supposed to live your life and these are the reasons: bang, bang, bang, because it says in the Bible." Lois

"Like, I feel like I [want] time to pick through the bones I have before I have a solid grasp of what I actually do believe." Anna

"We used to have these suppers where we'd talk, we'd ask our parents a bunch of questions and they'd answer them and I'd always be like, 'Ah, this is so much fun,' or whatever." Eldon

"I fundamentally believe you can't understand an infinite God if you are willing to accept answers and stop questioning … you need to be asking questions." Gary

"When they're preaching something, sometimes you have questions and after the service you go ask the pastor or you talk to people from the church and they clarify things and that helps." Edna

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I'm in a life stage where I question everything.
- I don't just want to be preached at. I want to be asked questions.
- I need to ask questions in order to grasp what I really believe.
- The opportunity to ask questions in a safe environment is intriguing.
- Because God is infinite, my questions are endless.
- Opportunity to ask questions of my pastor is helpful.

Young adults are in a life stage where they have many questions. They are wrestling to make their faith their own. They often seek out as many opportunities as possible to ask their toughest questions and engage in dialogue. Many times, they're not even looking to have all of their toughest questions answered on the spot. They simply want to know that their questions will be listened to and taken seriously. They want to know that if the person they're asking doesn't know the answer, they will look it up and get back to them.

Content

Contrary to the belief of some, many young adults crave sermons that keep the gospel at the centre and dig deep into theology. They are interested in learning about Jesus – his life, death, resurrection, and ascension – and all of the benefits that come from him. But that's not all. They also want to engage in tough topics like sex and world religions.

DEPTH

Many emerging adults crave depth. They're not interested in maintaining the status quo. They'd rather take the risk of being in over their heads than settle for comfort and become stagnant.

The same is true when it comes to the content of sermons. Many young adults are frustrated by surface-level, feel-good teaching. They want to be afforded the opportunity to go deep and be challenged. Here's what a number of young adults have to say:

"I think ultimately you need to be focused on Jesus. And the rest of the stuff, I mean, details, they're okay, but I mean, ultimately you can't be distracted from that, you know, that's what it's about ... he's kinda the point, you know, and all these other things can be ways of getting to know him, ways of learning through him, but you know, they are not important in and of themselves. So, you know, I guess anything that's focusing on Jesus has a real potential to challenge and encourage and support and just change lives." Bill

"They get wishy-washy ... they'll just give them this wishy-washy Jesus loves you rainbows sunshine puppy dogs glitter version of the gospel to win them over. But it's not about winning people over for popularity points and brownie points with team Jesus ... There's no, sort of, challenge, there's no stretching. There's no real encouragement to do better. It's just trying to make people feel all warm and fuzzy inside and hoping they'll turn out for the best. But what happens when that warm and fuzziness wears out? 'Cause it will. 'Cause it's not real." Don

"One thing I like about church is the fact that we're challenged all the time, and when I say challenged – challenged with the Word. And we're reminded that we need to be accountable to the Lord. I like to be challenged by the Word." Edna

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Church should make Jesus the centre of all sermons.
- Church should challenge us with Scripture.

TOUGH TOPICS

Some topics, such as world religions, are challenging mostly because they require much time and effort to understand them well. For beliefs such as the teaching against sex outside marriage, the type of difficulty may be more of the emotions and the will than of the intellect. The young adults we talked to said they want to engage with both types of tough themes.

"We talked about Mormonism, in-depth study of Jehovah Witness, all this stuff that we had not had exposure to, so that was great, and in grade 12 we did church history. He made it really relevant and interesting, these things, it wasn't just surface level." Gary

"We went over to the pastor's house ... and we would talk and watch movies and some of the best information that I got was from those sessions and they gave me a stronger basis in my faith and factually what I believe. To argue, I guess ... to be able to argue with someone the 'Does God really exist' sort of point." Suzanne

"As for sexuality, I don't think there was enough teaching on it or anything. Basically it was chastity 100% and that's it. You have no other choice ... you're not going to have sex before marriage, and that's it ... So really, you're not educated about anything, or about your own sexuality as a person and

stuff. I think that's a big part of your person, and we, as a teenager and stuff like that, definitely not enough teaching about that, at all." Marly

"Umm, well, I think that the one negative thing about my church, and I don't think they're alone, is that they would just tell us, 'Don't have sex before you're married,' but they wouldn't discuss ... There was no conversations about some of the other issues that go along with ... Like, it's almost like sex was a taboo subject, right? You would get to talk about 'Don't have sex before you're married,' but there was no opportunity in my church to talk about other issues that there are questions about. Like there are other sexual things besides intercourse ... like masturbation, all that stuff." Roy

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- It's important to prepare us to deal with competing religions and worldviews.
- We need to teaching on culturally relevant topics dealing with sex. We need to be taught more than "Don't have sex before marriage."

Many young adults aren't afraid to address tough topics or be pressed with difficult questions. They look for churches whose teaching is engaging and challenging. They want pastors to speak about topics that aren't normally talked about – even if they might be a little uncomfortable for some. Yet at the same time, many young people – sometimes even the same ones who readily assent to other Christian teachings – can experience difficulties with certain teachings that are deeply countercultural.

Teachings perceived as unrealistic

Emerging adulthood is often characterized by experimentation as people transition from one stage of life to another. They are finding their way (often with little help from parents or churches) and desire as many different experiences as possible. They may hook up, break up, plug in, drop out, cohabit and party hard. They may experiment with everything from living scenarios to sexual partners, from drugs to raves.

The problem is, many emerging adults choose to engage in the lifestyle practices that go against the lifestyle expectations of the church. To make matters worse, even if the church does a tremendous job at accepting, loving and gently calling to account those that engage in illicit practices such as premarital sex and partying, young adults often choose not to attend church because of frustration, guilt or inconvenience.

PREMARITAL SEX

When it comes to the church's expectation that sex should be saved for marriage, many young adults scoff. To them, this is an outdated expectation that is totally unfathomable. They are turned off by the church's teaching on abstinence; those that choose not to abide by it often feel judged and rejected by church members. To many of them, having sex outside of marriage is totally normal and even a necessary part of being in relationship and learning about the person they're dating.

"Premarital sex is not a big deal nowadays ... If they changed those teachings to say, you know, it would be a bad thing to have a child out of wedlock, or I dunno, it would be a bad thing to have – to corrupt an innocent person. Those are good teachings. To teach against premarital sex is unrealistic." Stan

"I mean, back in the day, you know, people hit puberty at age 13 or 14 and then got married at age 17. So, you know, three years of being horny. Now, you know, we hit puberty at age 9 and get married at age 30. So, we really really really need to update our discourse on sexuality and think about, you know, how can we enjoy our sexuality." Haley

"Basically it was chastity 100% and that's it. You have no other choice, and that's it, you're not going to have sex before marriage, and that's it." Marly

"And they were basically drilling everybody in the congregation [about sex before marriage being a sin], 'cause the congregation was mainly youth-focused … And, you know, it felt weird that I'm just coming to this new church and I'm being drilled for something which, obviously I've taken part in it." Wayne

"We moved in together and that was sort of the final straw. Like, I could question all I wanted but as soon as I, you know, stepped out of line sexually there was a huge sort of backlash from, you know, my religious relatives and from my church community and from, like, random friends I hadn't heard from. Like, I received these letters of rebuke because [my partner] wasn't a Christian and because we were living in – because we were having sex, and living together. And then it was just like, screw you people. I've been part of your community for 15 years and then all of sudden I'm not welcome … Umm, so that was it." Haley

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- The church's teaching against premarital sex is unrealistic. It's not a big deal nowadays.
- Times have changed. The church needs to catch up.
- The church fails to consider choices other than chastity, but should.
- The church drills people on the need to avoid sexual sin.
- The church is unwelcoming toward people who step out of line sexually.

Emerging adults in Canada today have grown up in a social environment where freedom of choice is taken for granted, and right and wrong are considered a matter of personal opinion. It's not surprising then that young adults are annoyed and even upset by the church's expectation that people should refrain from having sex before marriage. Many young adults see the church as legalistic and attribute to it a mean-spirited desire to keep young people from enjoying pleasure.

THE PARTY SCENE

Many young adults move away from home and find themselves in a position of new-found freedom and increased autonomy. They are afforded the opportunity to explore a number of different social spheres, and engage in a variety of behaviours they were kept from before embarking on adulthood. Many young people end up exchanging church participation for the party scene.

"I started to follow the wrong crowd and be, I guess if you want to say, mentored by the wrong mentor and I lost my way. I can't blame him for that or the guys I worked with because I could have said no, but because you work with them you look up to them and you start to follow a path that you didn't realize you could ever end up on." John

"So I started hanging out more with friends that weren't Christian and totally stopped reading my Bible and praying. And as I got older like that, those seeds of selfishness rooted and then eventually when I was about 18 or 19 I actually, in my head, made a decision that God did not exist." Sylvia

"I'd go out on Saturday night and I'd stay over at a friend's house, so I wouldn't go to church." Lois

"I don't go to church, I sort of do my thing, party hard, have fun." Tyson

"And my approval and relationships at school were a greater priority than my religious life. So I started going out on weekends and having fun with my friends and wanting to sleep in on Sunday, so yeah." Malcolm

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- I started hanging out with the wrong crowd and lost my way.
- I'd stay out Saturday night, so I wouldn't go to church Sunday morning.
- Partying hard and having fun is more important than going to church.
- Approval from friends is more important than faith and church.

What we hear young adults saying is that friends have a huge impact on their behavioural choices, Sunday mornings are for sleeping in, and young adulthood is reserved for having fun. Young adults need help to navigate through life well, but they are often left to their own devices. The options of the world grab them as they find value and acceptance there.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The majority of those in our survey that left church during emerging adulthood communicated that the church's views on homosexuality are too restrictive. They believe that the church should solemnize gay and lesbian marriages that and practicing homosexuals should be allowed to participate fully in the ministries of the church. Here is what the young adults we interviewed had to say:

"Everyone has the right to choose. The church says it's wrong … God thinks it's wrong, or the church thinks it's wrong. Well, I dunno. I've prayed about it and I've thought about it. I'm surrounded by it at dance, you know. I don't have a problem with it." Jack

"[The church] is missing out on a demographic that could become a very contributing participant in the church. They have to be inclusive. Maybe [they should] change their stance on sexuality … People are taught not to be exclusive, but yet the church is still so, it's tough to look at the organization and you know, like I say, you can't have a hypocritical stance. You cannot lose trust or respect, and if you do you'll turn everybody off. Inclusion is important." Stan

"They said that homosexuality is not allowed and I cannot be part of a group that holds that belief. I was one of the people who wanted the church to be as inclusive as possible." Sarah

"Things like gay marriage for example … I felt like social equality – meaning they get the same benefits, things like that – all of that is really important, no matter your sexual orientation." Carol

"I had friends in high school who were gay, and I personally don't think you should judge anyone for that … The way church members spoke about those sort of topics completely turned me off. They were not very open, very judgmental, and I didn't like it at all because who are you to judge someone for something like that?" Lois

"I mean for me, gays and lesbians, that's their personal life. It doesn't make a difference to me. It doesn't change who they are as a person, so I've always been a believer in that I never like anything that treats them differently … For me I want to be part of a congregation that shares that belief with me and accepts them." Alvin

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Everyone has the right to choose; therefore, the choice of gays and lesbians should be accepted by all.
- Gays and lesbians should be included in all areas of church life, without boundaries.
- Gay marriage is a part of social equality, which should be upheld by the church.
- Churches shouldn't judge people for being gay.
- Gays and lesbians should be treated the same as everyone else.

According to some in the emerging generation, churches should marry gays and lesbians without finding fault, and those that engage in homosexual practices should be allowed to participate in the ministries of the church to whatever extent they want. When the church maintains boundaries concerning these practices, these young adults get "turned off." To them, the church is being exclusive, judgmental, arrogant and uncaring. They feel everyone deserves equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation.

However, not all young adults hold this view. A minority concur with Renita's comment:
"I was taught that whatever was in the Bible was the truth and not to, not for the church to treat people in same-sex relationships bad but to say that it was okay was kind of hypocritical to me … it

just didn't make sense that (gay and lesbian marriage) was actually being allowed and in some instance churches are actually (doing the) marrying." Renita

GENDER ROLES

It's important to many members of the emerging generation that women and men be treated equally. If they are themselves female, they want the opportunity to hold the same positions and roles as men in the church and they don't want to be placed in a box when it comes to their function within the home. Even if young adult women don't personally want to step into the roles that men traditionally hold, they at least want to know that it's an option. When churches maintain that certain vocations are reserved either to men only or to women only, this repels some young adults.

"My church was fairly conservative and women couldn't speak, and I know one of – there was a lady that was big in helping to lead the youth group, but she felt a calling to be a – I guess be a pastor, like, she applied for the children's pastor role. But she was turned down because she was a woman. And so she ended up leaving ... Seeing that and trying to understand that, I think I guess I always felt like, like, in my church it was told that, like, women have a secondary role." Marion

"Women in the pulpit actually ... Umm, like, seriously, wake up. I dunno where they got that, there's only supposed to be men elders and that sort of thing. But in that church it was very much so, men are in charge of the church, for women to lead catechism was unheard of. And I'm sorry, I think that's absolutely ridiculous ... So if you have a woman who is running an executive company, or working as an executive in a company or a CEO or, you know, something in charge of a whole bunch of men, why on earth shouldn't a woman be able to lead spiritual matters in a church, umm, as well as a man can?" Lois

"I don't go anymore 'cause I find the gender roles really offensive, and I don't like having to clean up after other people just because I'm a girl ... They believe in the patriarch and the man as the head of the household, I don't think they believe in birth control, and multiply and God wants kids and all that, women's place is primarily family, you can do other stuff, but primarily you are a wife and mother and all that and I don't agree with that." Aaron

"Umm, you know, traditional gender roles as well, is very well espoused, especially in traditional Christian communities. It's about, umm, a life being subservient in a marriage relationship and, you know, that she submits to her husband, and he, you know, honours and respects her, and the whole complementarity of gender roles – how, you know, women and men are equal yet different, umm, but there's a huge power imbalance in that equation." Haley

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- It's ridiculous for the church to say that women can't hold public roles.
- When women aren't allowed hold the same positions as men, they are treated as second-class citizens.
- To say a woman's primary role is to be a wife and mother is demeaning.
- To say the man is head of the home and women need to be submissive is degrading.
- The idea that men and women are equal but have different roles to play is a power imbalance.

Many young women are quick to pick up on church teachings and actions that – accurately or not – are perceived to favour men over women. They want the options open to men to be open to them too. They also want the freedom to choose whether to uphold traditional gender roles in the home. When churches are seen as impeding their freedom to make these choices, many young adult women feel demeaned, become perturbed and exit the back door.

ULTIMATE TRUTH

For most Canadian young adults, right and wrong are considered a matter of personal opinion. To them, no one has the right to lay an exclusive claim to the truth. Everything is relative. That is to say, it's up to

each person to decide for him- or herself what is acceptable and what isn't. It also means that right and wrong may be redefined based on the situation.

When it comes to faith, young people are bothered by religious groups they see as claiming an exclusive hold on the truth. To the emerging generation, this is restrictive, intolerant and altogether narrow-minded. Here is a sampling of the sentiments offered by some of the church-leavers we interviewed:

"There is no right and wrong ever in anything, it's what you believe in you as an individual and what you choose to do." Elsie

"[Jesus'] life is meant to be interpreted in your own way ... When they say that Jesus died for your sins, I think it's more to be interpreted like, you know, this guy, he went around and said some good things and they beat him up for it. And they persecuted him. And to him it didn't matter, he still loved and forgave." Stan

"So I just really feel that, uh, you should do what's comfortable for you, and do what you feel is right." Wayne

"How can we think it's right to tell people that we are the only ones who are right?" Juliette

"To tell one religion they're wrong and all of a sudden you're right and glorified, you can't do that." Suzanne

"To impose behaviour on others, you impede the freedom of choice, which God himself has given." Jared

"I don't really think you can judge people on what they believe; it's more about what they choose to do and how they choose to act. And I think, I don't think a specific faith is such a huge thing." Janice

"I think being Christian or having faith of any kind is more about what you personally believe and what you, how you live your life ... my personal faith journey it's constantly evolving and changing ... You have to think about it and what works for me." Alvin

"I just don't think that people need to be labeled as a Christian or a Protestant Christian or a Muslim or anything like that. We all have one common goal, which is belief in God." John

Key Viewpoints of Young Adults:

- Truth is up to each person's interpretation.
- You can't say your belief is the only right one and all others are wrong.
- Your beliefs don't matter. What matters is being a good person.
- All religions are equal. We have the same goal to believe in God.

Many of those that leave church are frustrated by Christianity's claim to truth. To them, there are many paths that lead to God. They believe that all individuals have the ability to interpret truth for themselves. In short, most young church-leavers believe it's ridiculous for one religion to claim it holds the truth while others don't.

Many young adults say that, among their list of reasons for leaving the church, teaching and beliefs had a key role to play. This is plausible, since freedom is important to the emerging generation and anything that hinders it is a threat. For the most part, these young adults don't want to be told what to believe or how to behave. Yet through the church young adults are seeking challenge too, and they can be bold in following the hard teachings of our Lord.

Part IV

A SPOTLIGHT ON KEY TRENDS

9

FAMILY MATTERS

"Like I saw my mom every day, I'd come down and she'd be on the couch sitting in the morning, reading her Bible in the quiet. Or like, I'd always see her flipping through her Bible when she had free time from not having to run around and do stuff. So she was very open to talking about it, and she talked to me about it a lot. " Anna

"Parental influences, in short, trump peer influences," says sociologist Christian Smith; "the usually most crucial players in teenagers' lives [i.e., parents] disengage from them precisely when they most need conversation partners to help sort through these weighty matters."[48]

Smith echoes what sociological study after study has found – parents are usually the most important spiritual influence in the lives of their children.

Does our data support or refute this claim?

In our survey we asked several kinds of questions about young adults' families of origin. These included:

- The spiritual discipline practices of the parents
- Whether or not the parents encouraged exploration of faiths beyond the tradition they were raised in
- The immigration status of respondents and their parents.

We will now examine each of these and evaluate their possible influence on the religious service attendance patterns of young adults.[49]

Parental spiritual disciplines

When we looked at the spiritual disciplines of parents – and the relationship of these disciplines to subsequent attendance at religious services as young adults – we examined them as a group. We asked about parents reading their Bible regularly, praying beyond table grace, and attendance at religious services by parents. We asked about the practices of the respondent's mother and father separately. The questions were:

- My mother/father read the Bible regularly during my upbringing (Yes, No)
- I believe my mother/father prayed regularly outside of table grace (Yes, No)
- My mother/father attended religious services regularly during my upbringing (Yes, No).

[48] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition,* 284–5.

[49] Usually we measure correlations of one kind or another, that is, how one variable changes along with another variable. With correlation, researchers must take care to not read in causation, that is to say: "*x* and *y* went up together; therefore, *x* drives *y*." When dealing with time sequence data, however, we know that causation can only work in one direction. If, for example, a mother's frequency of Bible reading in the childhood of a young adult correlates with high church attendance as a young adult, we know that (at most) it was the Bible reading having the influence on the subsequent church attendance and not the other way around. What happens in the future cannot influence what happened in the past, though neither does it guarantee that the mother's Bible reading actually *caused* the youth to remain in the church.

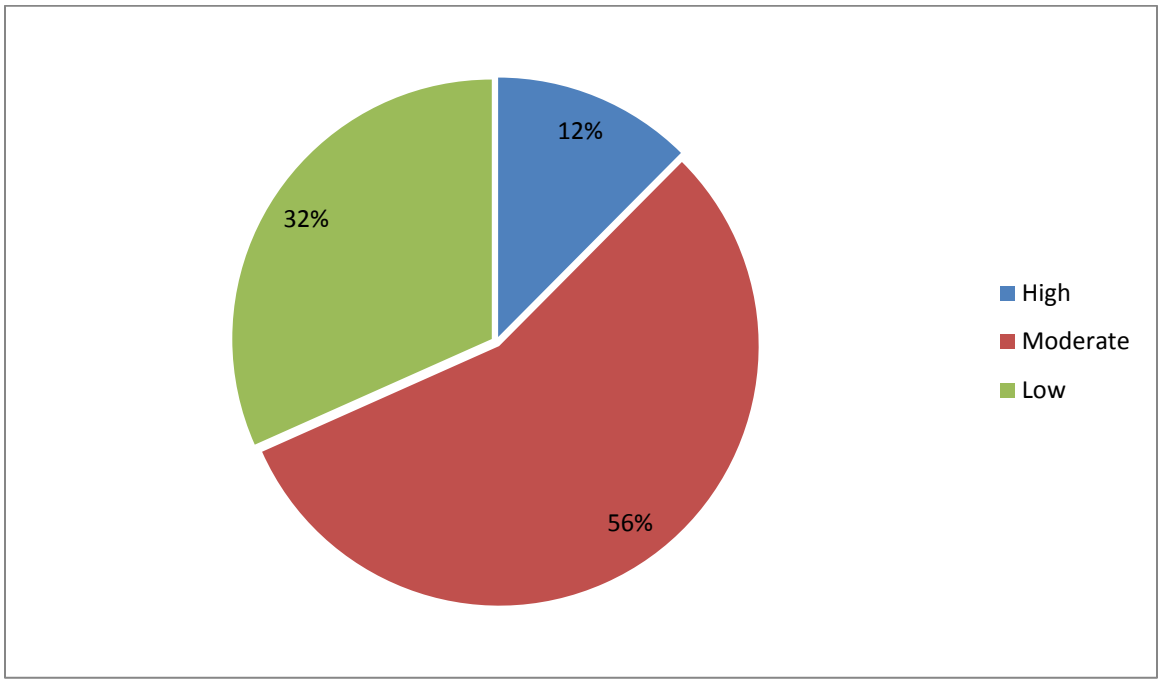
A cluster analysis detected three groups – or types – of parental practice in the spiritual disciplines. We name these groups High, Moderate and Low to describe whether the parents engaged in these disciplines or not.

In the High spiritual discipline cluster, parents almost always engaged in all spiritual disciplines. The converse was true for the Low cluster. The Moderate cluster had a mixture of yes and no answers to these questions.

It should be emphasized again that these answers are retrospective and impressionistic. These are young adults' dominant memories about the spiritual disciplines of their parents. The level of practice could have waxed and waned, but this is how that practice was remembered. That a particular impression was made, however, does speak to the enduring nature of that parental practice. A retrospective impression is a lasting one that likely grows out of observing a consistent behaviour.

In our findings, elaborated below, we discovered a higher rate of observance for Evangelical traditions. While these activities are marks of piety in all three Christian traditions (Catholic, Mainline, and Evangelical), Bible reading, prayer and church attendance tend to be especially exhorted as a devotional package in Evangelical traditions. That tendency may explain the higher rates of observance among parents of young adults who were raised in Evangelical traditions.

Chart 4.1. Distribution of parental spiritual discipline clusters

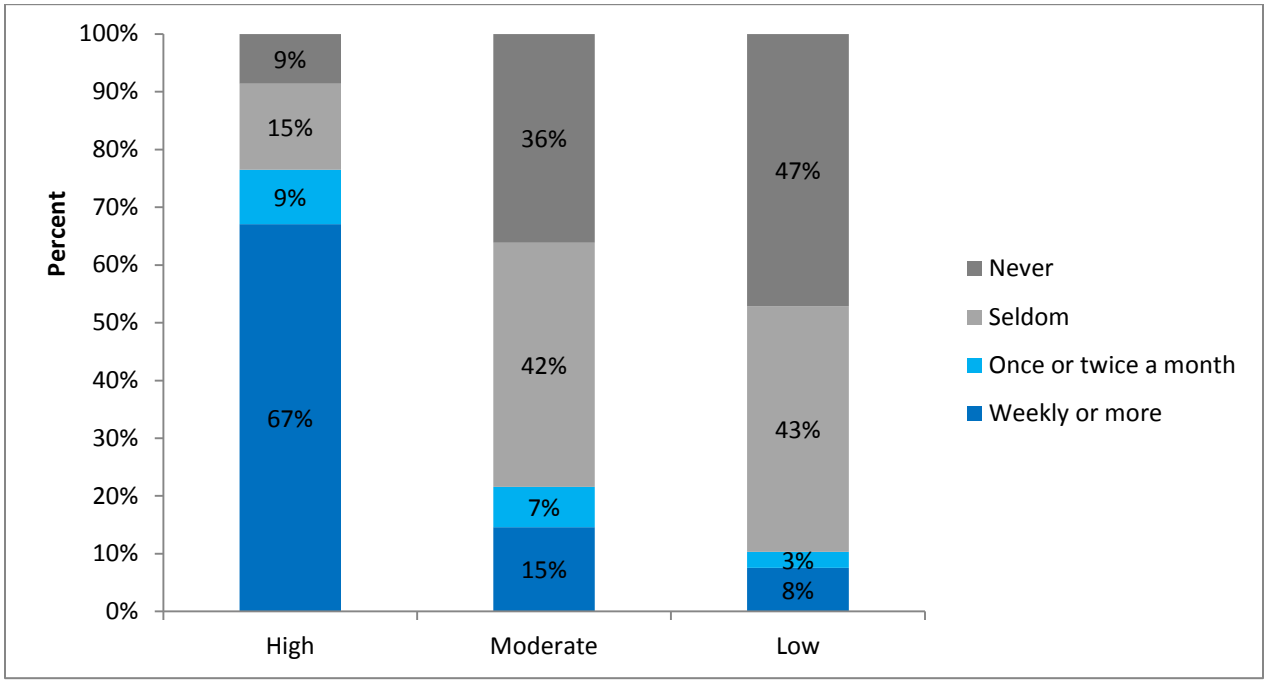


Three-quarters of young adults whose parents were in the High spiritual discipline cluster were in the Engagers group of respondents. Three quarters of young adults whose parents were in the High spiritual discipline category were from Evangelical traditions.

Consider:

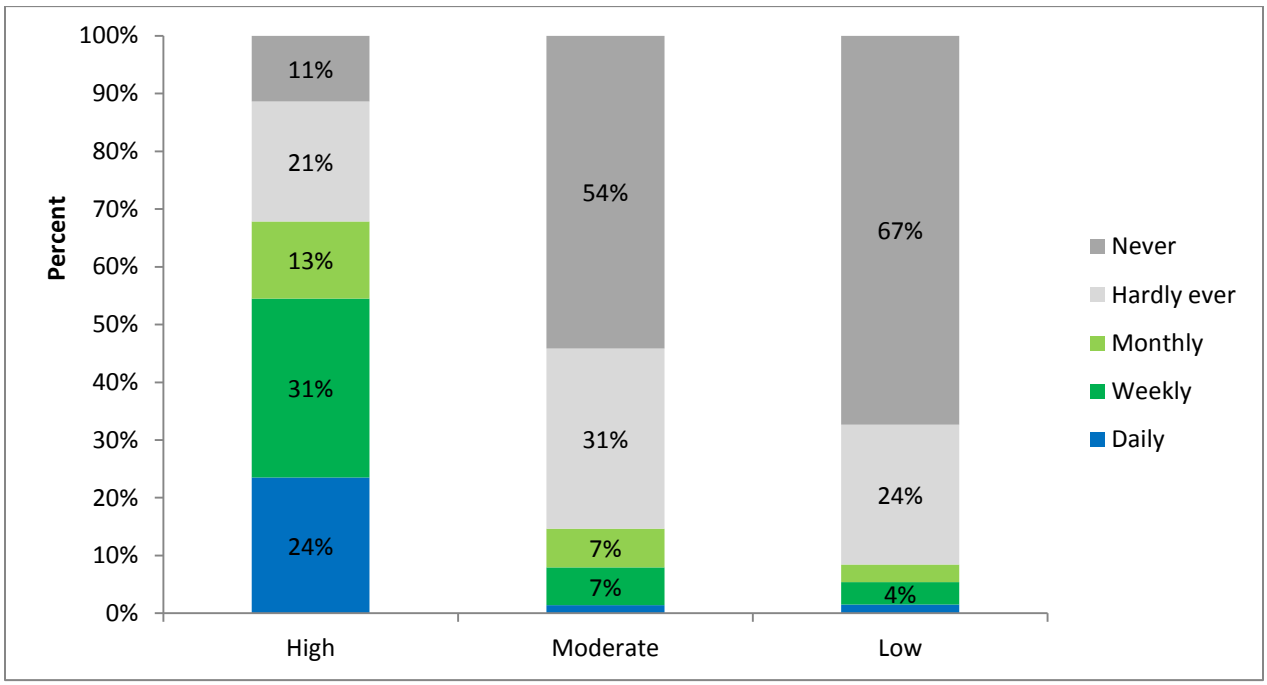
> *What influence might parental spiritual disciplines have on the spiritual disciplines of their children as young adults?*

Chart 4.2. Attendance at religious services as a young adult, by parental spiritual discipline cluster



Young adults whose parents were in the High spiritual discipline cluster were about five times as likely to attend religious services weekly or more as a young adult than those with parents in the Moderate or Low parental spiritual discipline cluster.

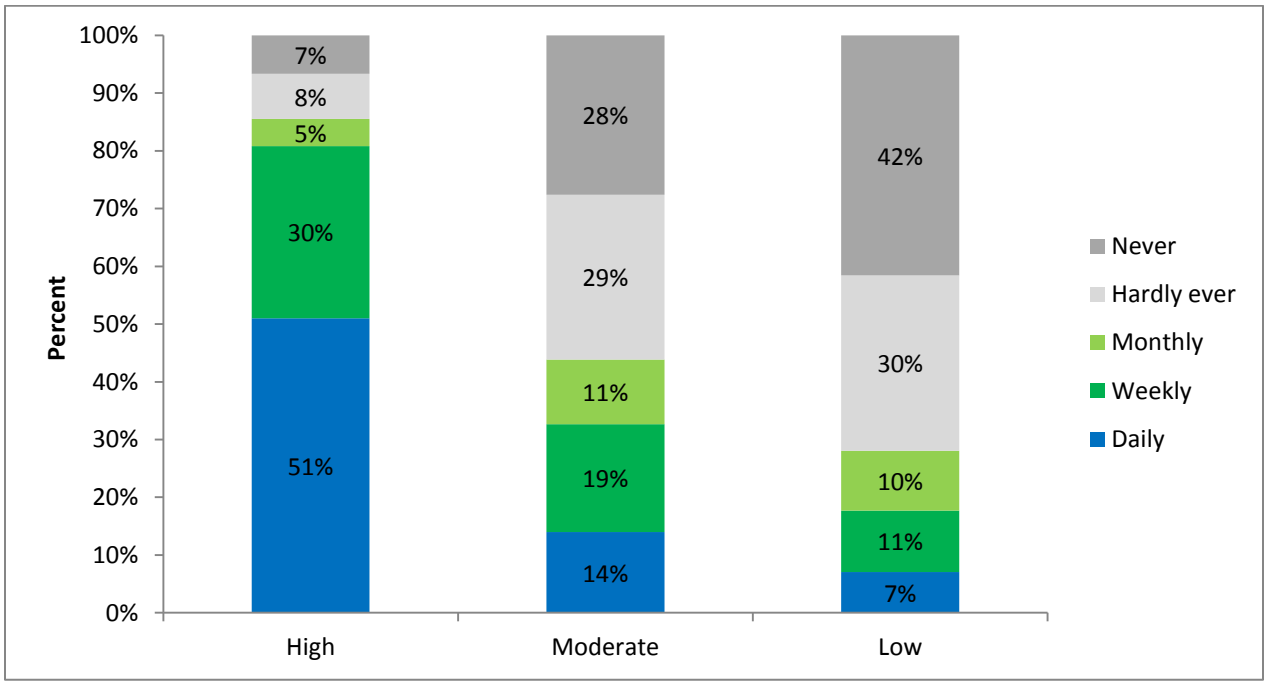
Chart 4.3. Frequency of Bible reading as a young adult, by parental spiritual discipline cluster



Note: Weekly includes "about weekly" and "several times a week," and Monthly includes "About monthly" and "2–3 times a month."

Young adults whose parents were in the High spiritual discipline cluster were three times more likely to read their Bibles at least weekly, and five times more likely to read their Bibles daily, than those whose parents were in other parental spiritual discipline clusters.

Chart 4.4. Frequency of private prayer as a young adult, by parental spiritual discipline cluster



Note: Weekly includes "about weekly" and "several times a week," and Monthly includes "About monthly" and "2–3 times a month."

Young adults whose parents were in the High parental spiritual discipline cluster were approximately three times more likely to pray daily than those whose parents came from other parental spiritual discipline clusters, and twice as likely to pray at least weekly.

If young adults remember their parents as being consistent in regular church attendance, prayer outside of table grace, and Bible reading, these spiritual disciplines are more likely to occur in their own lives.

Consider:

How can we help parents model the faith they hope their children will have?

Encouragement to explore other religions

We discovered no significant difference in the religious services attendance patterns of young adults whether their parents encouraged them to explore other faiths or not. Young adults who self-identified as agnostic or spiritual were twice as likely to have been encouraged by their parents to explore other religions than those who still identified with a Christian tradition, identified as atheists or indicated they had no religious affiliation. Only 14% of respondents indicated that they were encouraged by their parents to explore other religions. Of our 2,049 respondents only 5 indicated an affiliation with another world religion – of those 5, only 1 had been encouraged by their parents to explore. The majority of those who ceased to identify with the tradition that they were raised in did not affiliate with any organized religion at all.

Consider:

What is it about organized religion that young adults might be rejecting?

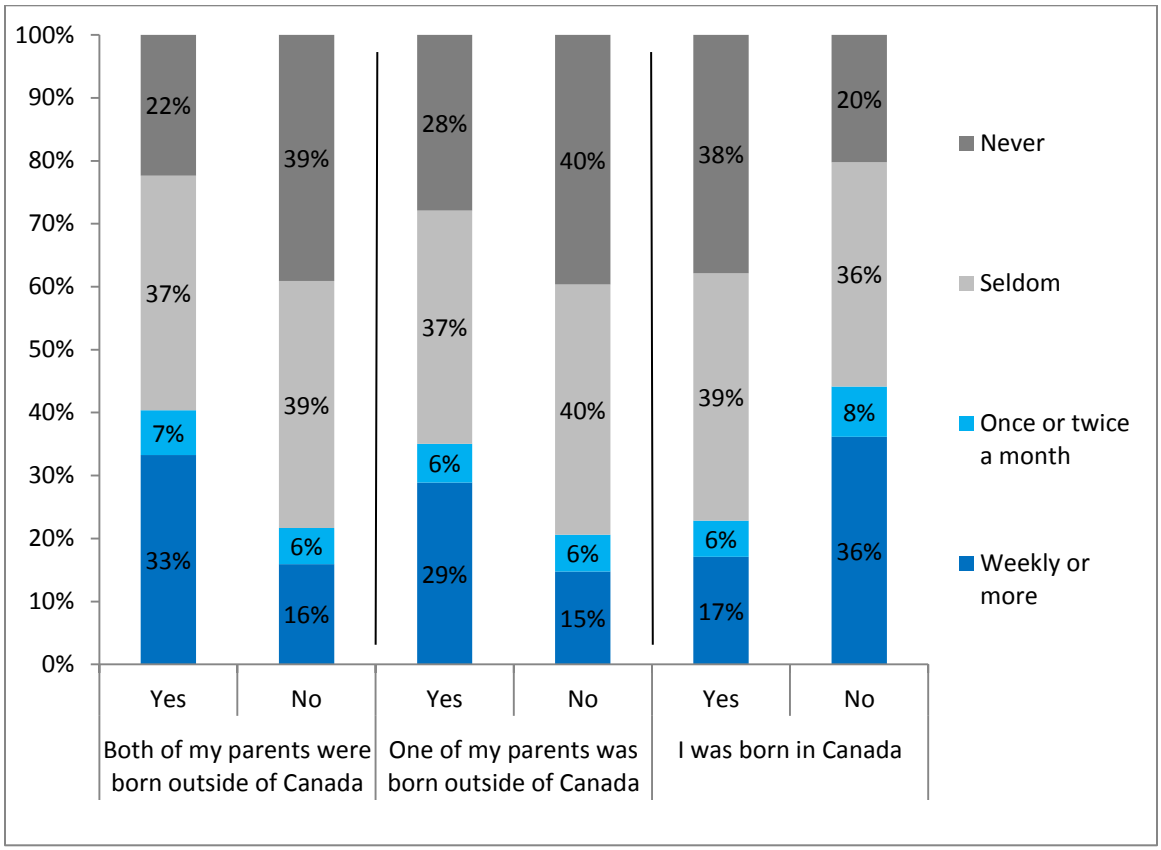
Immigration status

"After I was 6 we came to Canada, and my mother, regardless of the cultural differences, she found herself able to find a Spanish-speaking church where we congregated for about 2 years. And we were very excited about being in a church but it was different … Down there it's more alive. Kids dance and they're excited … Spanish churches are very upbeat … as a child, oh wow, I used to be able to pray out loud, and I noticed that children wouldn't pray out loud in Canada, they were a little bit embarrassed, and I wonder why, because it's not a cool thing to do … the culture … influencing the church. But I would do that … Even adults and children would pray to intercessory, that was including children, in Canada that is just the adults and the kids go to a separate place." Edna

Only 9% of the respondents were born outside of Canada; however, 29% had at least one parent who was born outside of Canada while both parents of 17% of our respondents were immigrants.

Having at least one parent born outside of Canada nearly doubled the likelihood that our respondents attended religious services at least monthly as a young adult. Roughly speaking, for those young adults whose parents were both born in Canada, only 1 in 5 attend religious services at least month, compared to 2 in 5 for those having at least one parent born outside of Canada (see chart 4.5 below).

Chart 4.5. Frequency of attendance at religious services as a young adult, by immigration status

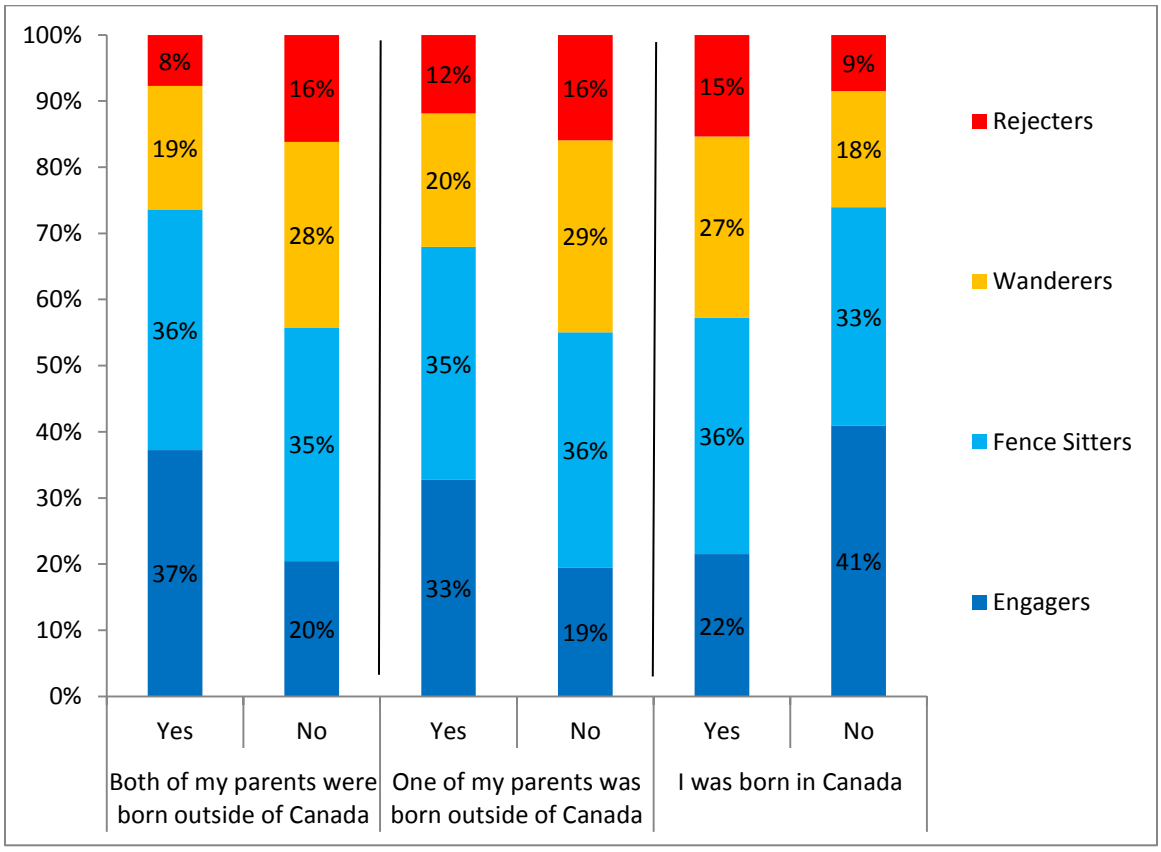


Three in 10 who were raised in a Catholic or Evangelical tradition had at least one parent who was born outside of Canada. Only 2 in 10 from a Mainline Protestant background reported the same. Those who

were raised in a Catholic tradition were the most likely to be from a family with both parents born outside of Canada (21%), whereas only 17% of those raised in an Evangelical tradition and 8% of those raised in a Mainline tradition said the same.

Being an immigrant or having immigrant parents is clearly correlated with higher attendance at religious services for young adults.

Chart 4.6. Immigration status, by spiritual type



Young adults were more likely to be Engagers if either they or at least one of their parents was born outside of Canada.

Consider:

> *Why might young adults with at least one parent who was born outside of Canada be more likely to attend religious services?*

The consistent parental modeling of spiritual disciplines of both parents appears to have a strong positive influence on the practice of these same spiritual disciplines by their children later in life. It may be not only the practice of these disciplines but also the connection that these practices creates with the wider church community that produces this result. These spiritual practices also tend to strengthen one's relationship with God.

When we compare the influence of the modeling of spiritual disciplines with the influence of parental encouragement to explore other religions, it would appear that what parents do is more influential than what they say.

Being an immigrant or having a parent who was born outside of the country appears to be correlated with a more positive engagement with church. Immigrants come from a variety of cultures. Therefore, it is likely that the larger share of the difference in the outlook of those from families where both parents were born in Canada, versus familes where one parent or more was born outside the country, rests with Canadian culture.

When children arrive

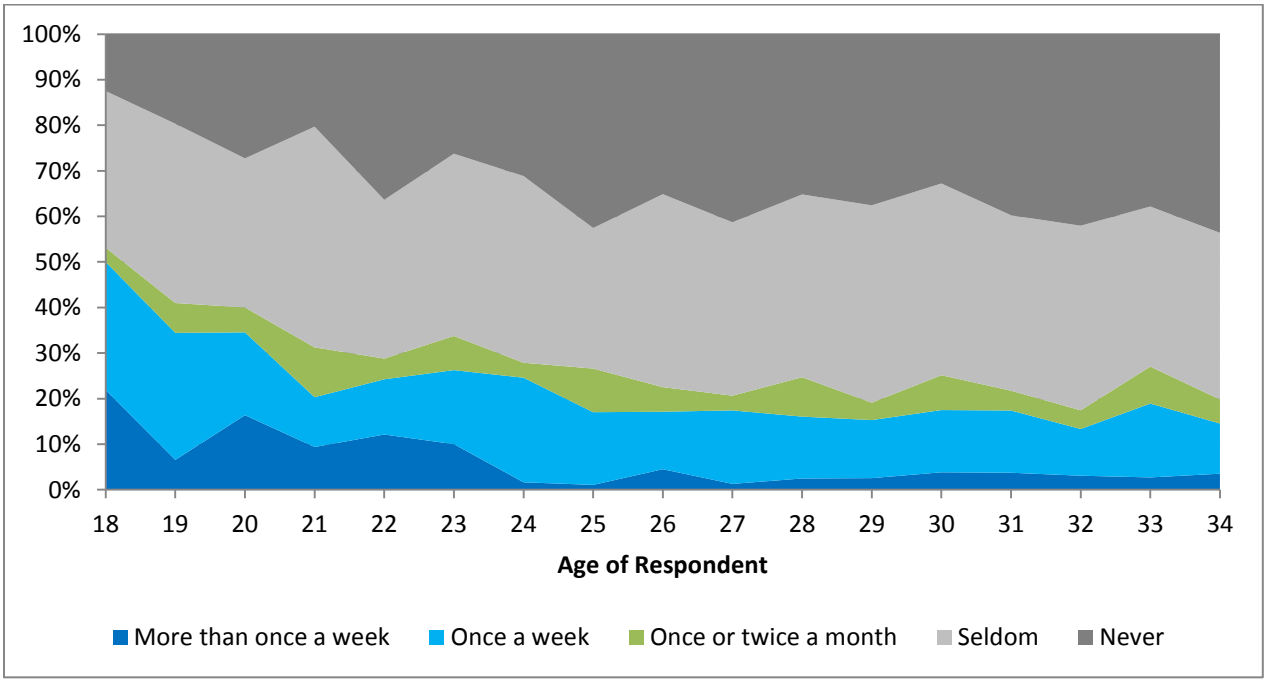
Sociologists have long assumed that young adults will tend to return to a more active church life once they marry and have children. These watershed events are being pushed off further and further into the future. We wanted to see if our data provided any support for this theory.

We do not know the marital status of our respondents; however, we do know whether they have children who live with them in the home. While we cannot test the impact of marriage on return to church, we can examine the impact of children on that decision. The second piece of data that we will consider is the age of the respondent.

Our hypothesis is that church attendance will not increase much with age and with the presence of children.

Chart 4.7 below shows the attendance patterns by the age of respondent in our survey. It is the large trends that are important in this chart, not the minor fluctuations up and down. We can observe that attendance at religious services is actually higher for those between the ages of 18 and 24 (when we might expect young adults to be in college or university) than for those who are older. In fact, it appears that the life transition from college or university to a first major career job results in another drop in attendance. Following this drop, there is no discernible increase in attendance with age. In this chart we are not following the attendance patterns of individuals over time; rather, we are seeing the attendance pattern of different age cohorts.

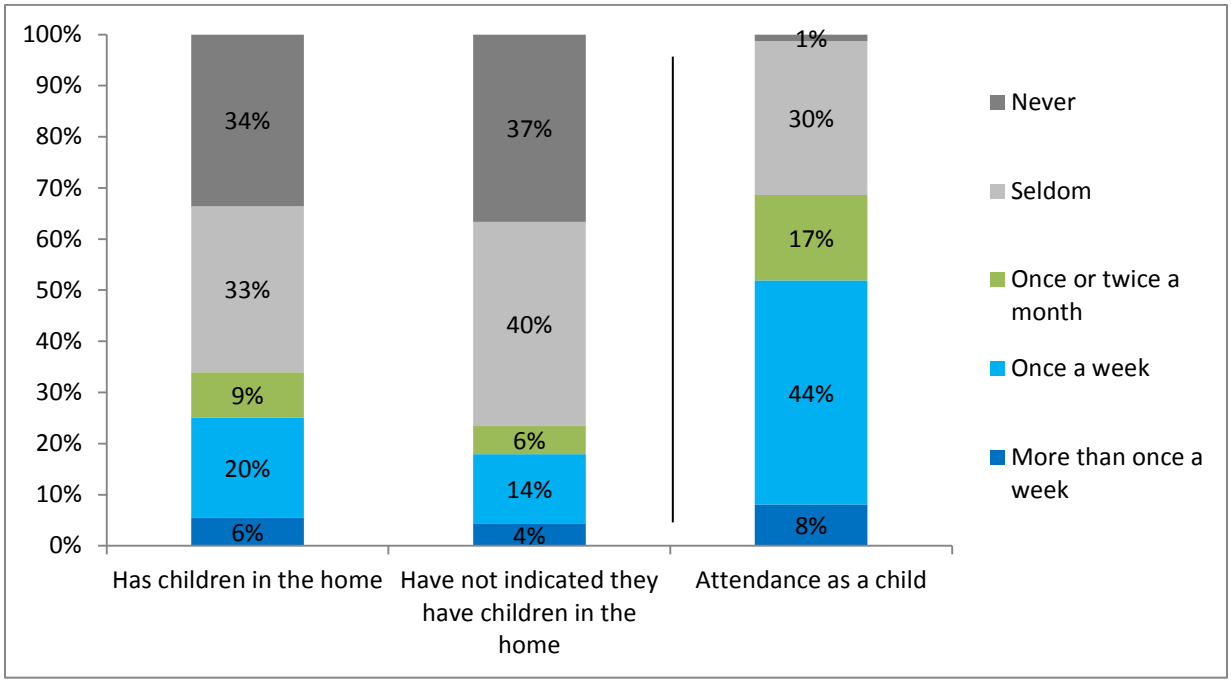
Chart 4.7. Age of respondent and frequency of attendance at religious services



In our sample only 271 respondents indicated that they had children in the home, while most of the rest of the respondents had not answered this question. Therefore, we cannot look at those with children versus those without children. We can only look at the 271 that we know have children in the home.

Chart 4.8 below shows that that those who have indicated that they have children who live with them in the home are slightly more likely to attend religious services than those who have not indicated that they have children in the home. Certainly these are not the kinds of gains that would replace the losses that the church has experienced among young adults.

Chart 4.8. Attendance at religious services, by declared presence of children in the home as an adult, and as a child



There are modest signs of return among those with children in the home, but this effect alone will not make up for the droves that are leaving. It appears that young adults settle into an attendance pattern following the transition from the parental home or the transition from higher education to the workplace, and then stay there. Age alone is not bringing them back to church.

10

HOW YOUNG ADULTS PRACTICE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

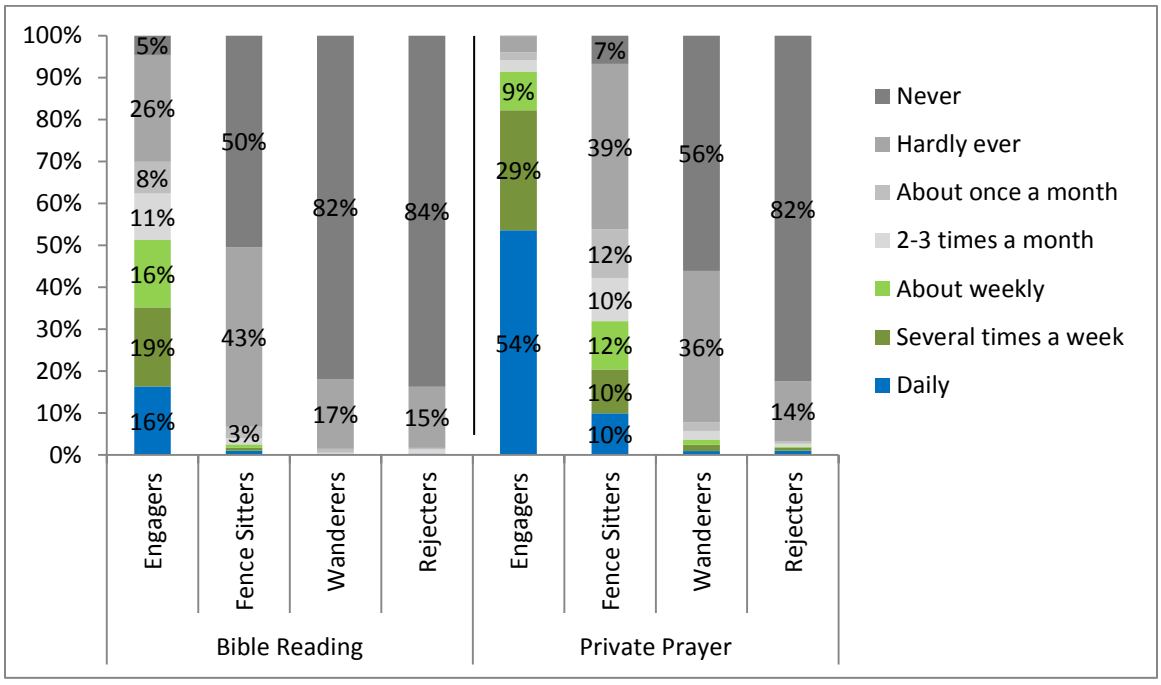
"I entered into a deeper place, or relationship with Jesus because I experienced fellowship, I was in Bible studies, my prayer life increased … And then whenever I wanted to I could see a spiritual director for confession … I go to church on Sundays so that I can receive Christ in body, right-through communion. And that's the thing that I value the most because, although sometimes I don't feel the transformation I know it's taking place. Like I know through that I have Christ within me." June

After looking at the spiritual disciplines of the *parents* of young adults we now turn to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading and Bible study as practiced by young adults *themselves*. Attendance at religious services is also considered a spiritual discipline (see chart 2.10).

Engagers are more likely than the other spiritual types to participate in either Bible reading or personal prayer. Bible reading, however, is less frequently practiced than personal prayer regardless of spiritual type (see chart 4.9 below). Bible reading is almost exclusively an activity of Engagers. Even among this type, only half read their Bible at least weekly, while less than a fifth report reading their Bibles daily. Personal prayer is engaged in by most of Engagers and some of Fence Sitters on at least a weekly basis. Wanderers and Rejecters report almost never engaging in personal prayer.

While private prayer is engaged in more frequently, we believe some of the reported increase in practice concerns the lack of definition for what constitutes prayer, compared to the more restrictively defined activity of Bible reading. Bible reading is an intentional act that normally requires a certain amount of planning. Prayer, by contrast, can be spontaneous and its definition can vary.

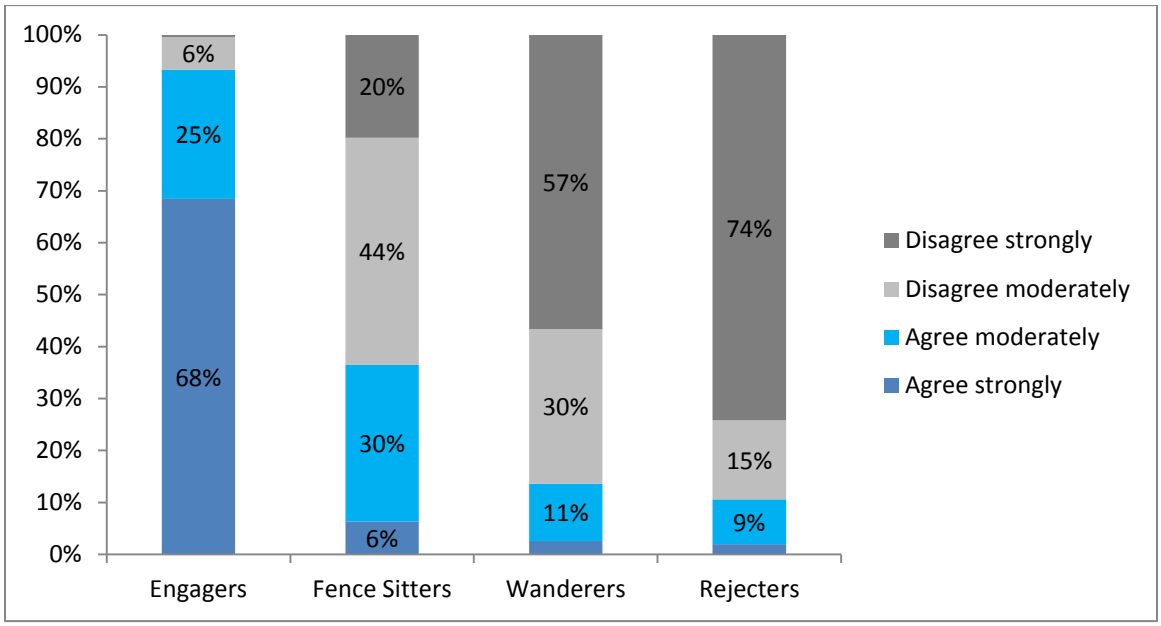
Chart 4.9. Frequency of Bible reading and private prayer, by spiritual type



In comparing the frequency of young adults' practice of spiritual disciplines, personal prayer would be practiced most often, followed by attendance at religious services and then Bible reading.

While Bible reading is the least frequently practiced spiritual discipline, there appears to be a greater openness to Bible study with a friend (see chart 4.10 below), even among the Wanderers and Rejecters.

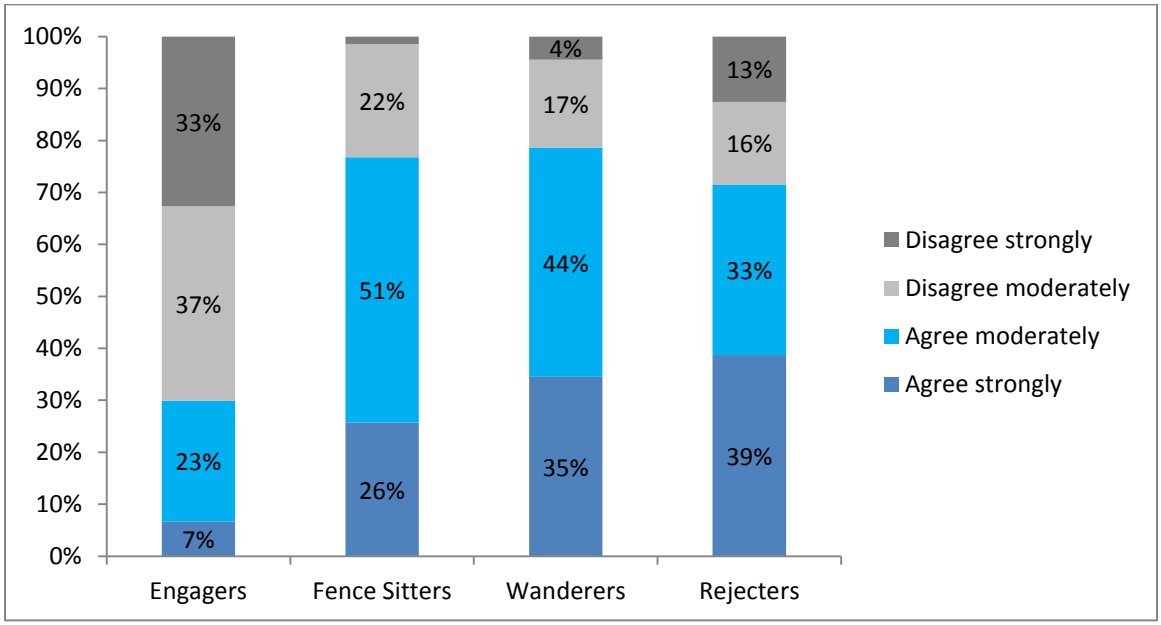
Chart 4.10. "I would be willing to study the Bible with a friend," by spiritual type



Consider:

1. *Why might young adults be more open to studying the Bible with a friend than studying the Bible in the context of a worship service?*
2. *How can we equip people in our congregations to study the Bible alongside our young adults?*

Chart 4.11. "Doing private religious readings and praying at home is the same as attending church," by spiritual type



Church attendance has been largely disconnected from the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading and private prayer.

11

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE AND LEAD

"I think they really formed me as a leader. I got lots of chances to lead. I still love working with kids and I think that's something that came from that time." Marion

We wanted to measure the participation of young adults in church life in general – and their participation in church leadership in particular. We also wanted to examine their perceptions of who should be permitted to participate in congregational leadership.

We asked respondents for their level of agreement with the following statements:

1. I have been given the opportunity to lead in church.
2. In my experience, church is a place where my talents go unappreciated.
3. In my experience, the opinions of youth matter to church leaders.
4. Churches should allow women to hold the same leadership positions as men.
5. Women didn't have the rights they should have in the church I grew up in.
6. Churches should allow gay and lesbian people who remain celibate to participate fully in their ministries.
7. Churches should allow people who are practicing a gay or lesbian lifestyle to participate fully in their ministries.

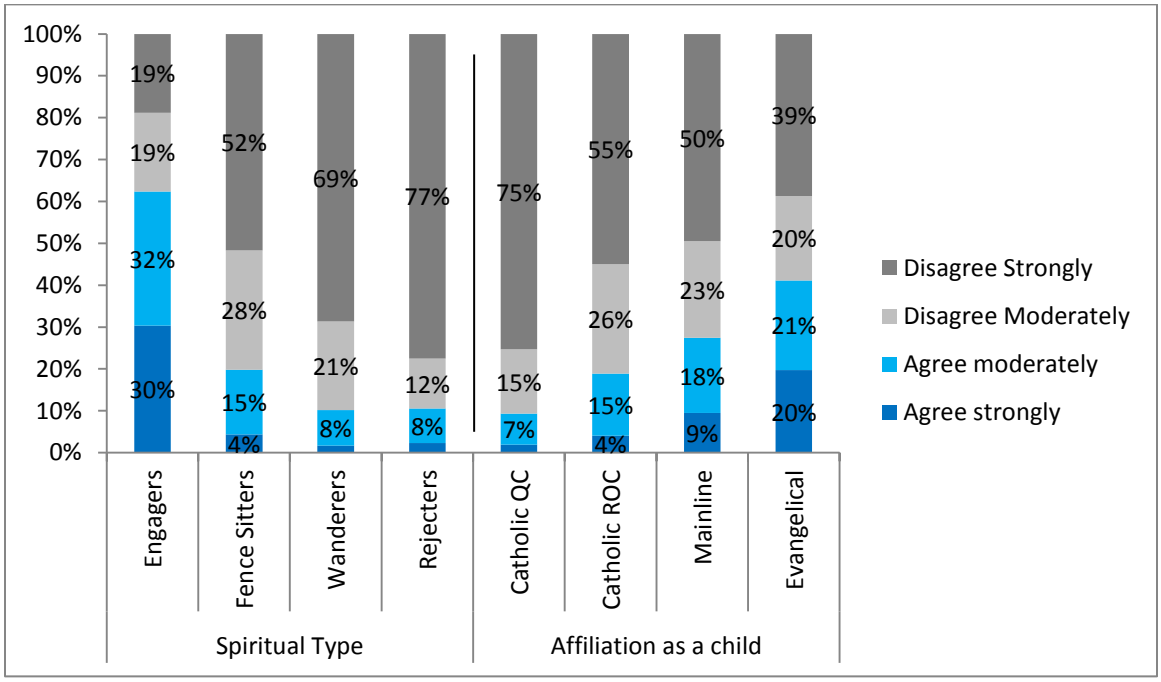
The first three questions deal with the personal experience of young adults in leadership and participation. The last four deal with issues of women and homosexuals in leadership, two issues that remain controversial to differing degrees in some congregations and denominations.

Because these issues deal closely with congregational life, we will analyze our data by our four spiritual types as well as the religious affiliation of our respondents in childhood. We will further, segment Roman Catholics into Catholics in Quebec (Catholic QC) and Catholics in the Rest of Canada (Catholic ROC).

Young adults' opportunities to participate and lead

The young adults in our survey were asked about their opportunities to lead, without a specific timeframe to reference. It is possible, therefore, that a child grew up in one tradition where she felt she was denied an opportunity to lead, and subsequently changed religious traditions where she was welcomed into leadership. We cannot tell whether her answer to a question about participation in church life refers to the first religious tradition or the second. These answers are impressionistic amalgams of their experience. What we are largely discovering is whether their church experience is perceived as positive or negative. We suspect that negative experiences will tend to reduce the participation of young adults in church life.

Chart 4.12. "I have been given the opportunity to lead in church," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Engagers were the most likely to say they had been offered opportunities to lead in the church. They were three times more likely to report leadership opportunities than Fence Sitters, the spiritual type with the second greatest reported amount of experience of church leadership. Those who have largely ceased to attend religious services, Wanderers and Rejecters, were the least likely to have experienced opportunities to lead (see chart 4.12 above). Respondents who were raised in Protestant traditions, and Evangelical ones in particular, were more likely to have reported leadership opportunities.

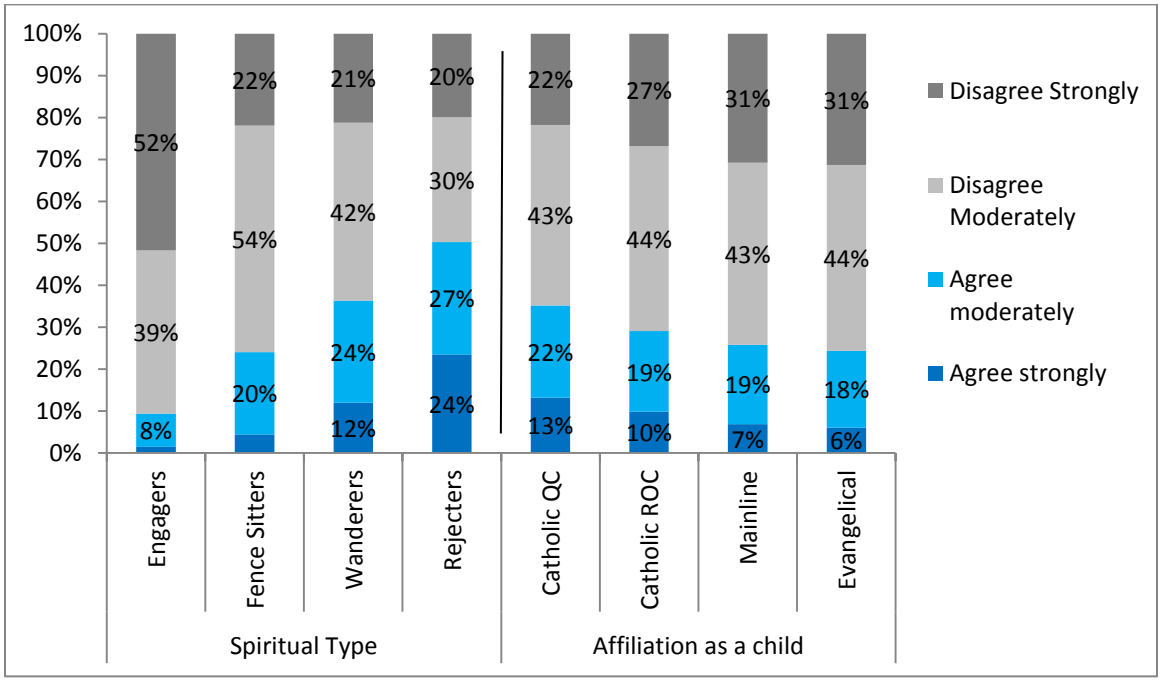
Among those raised Catholic, those outside of Quebec were the most likely to have been given opportunities to lead. We suspect that much of the Quebec-ROC differences can be explained by their different attendance patterns. Catholics in the ROC tend to attend religious services more often, and higher frequency of participation results in more opportunities for leadership. In fact, attendance influences measures of participation, and we will see similar patterns as we go along; those who tend not to attend tend not to participate in other church activities either.

Consider:

> *How could our congregations provide meaningful opportunities for teens and young adult to serve and lead in the church?*

Young adults who perceive that their talents were unappreciated in the church are less likely to attend as a young adult (see chart 4.13 below). The question about talents measures participation in the ministry of the church. Young adults who were raised in different traditions reported distinct differences in their opportunities to lead. They did not report significant differences in their reported opportunities to participate. The good news is that close to three-quarters of young adults perceive that their talents are at least somewhat appreciated by the church. When young adults feel their talents are unappreciated, they are more likely to be part of a spiritual type that is no longer attending religious services.

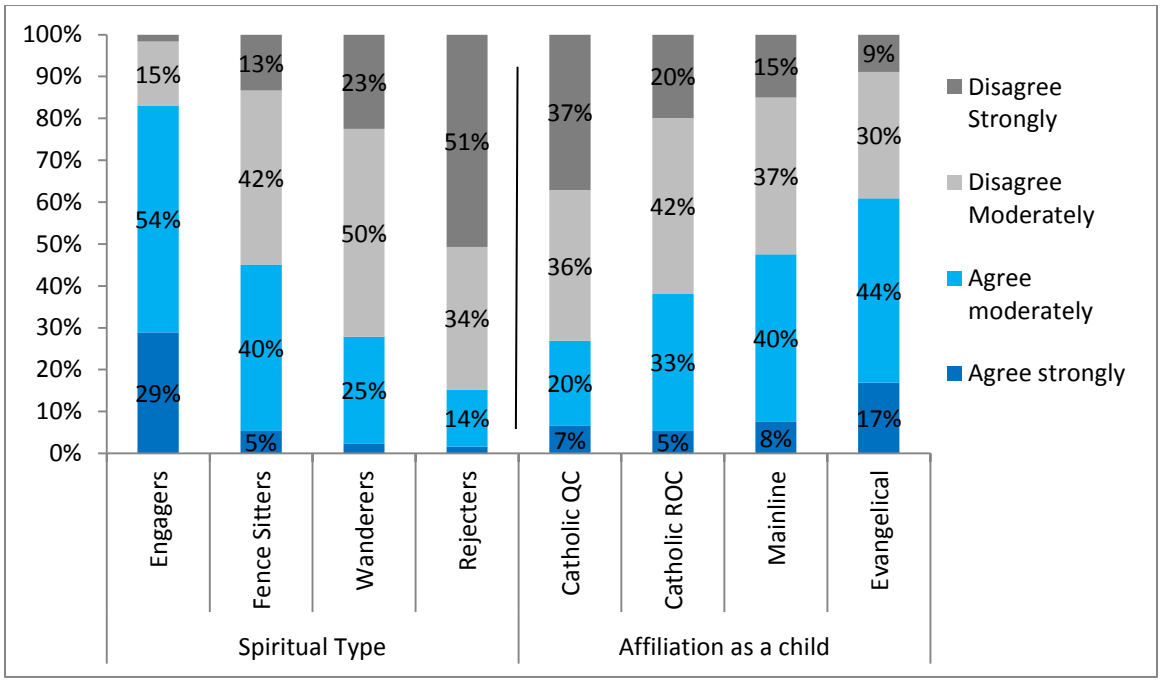
Chart 4.13. "In my experience, church is a place where my talents go unappreciated," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Consider:

> *How can churches create opportunities for teens and young adults to use their gifts in the ministry of the church?*

Chart 4.14. "In my experience, the opinions of youth matter to church leaders," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Young adults who feel their opinions matter to church leaders are more likely to belong to a spiritual type that is still involved in church (see chart 4.14 above). Those who were raised in Protestant traditions were more likely to indicate that they felt their opinions mattered to church leaders. What is striking, however, is that the percentage of young adults – most are Engagers – who strongly agreed that their opinions were valued was quite low (about 1 in 10.

Consider:

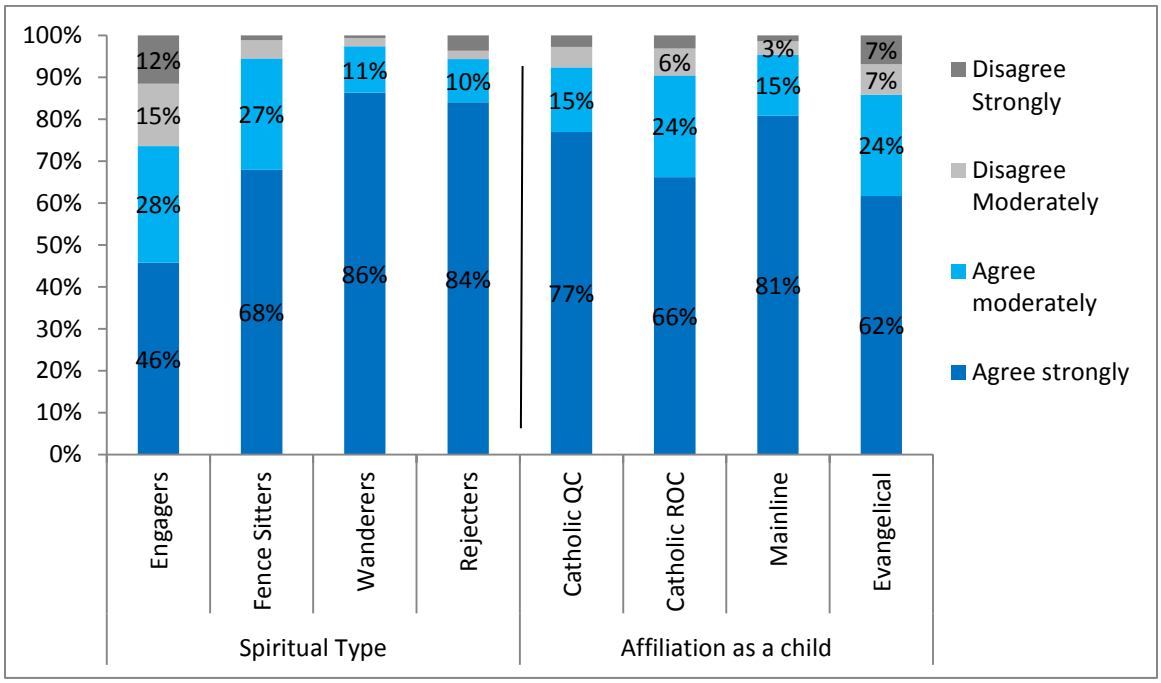
1. *How can churches incorporate the input of teens and young adults into their decision making?*
2. *What do young adults understand leadership to mean?*

Women in leadership

In the last section we examined how young adults perceive their access positions of church leadership. We will now examine their attitudes toward women in leadership and then homosexuals in leadership. In each case, these issues have either caused controversy or continue to be cause for controversy in many traditions.

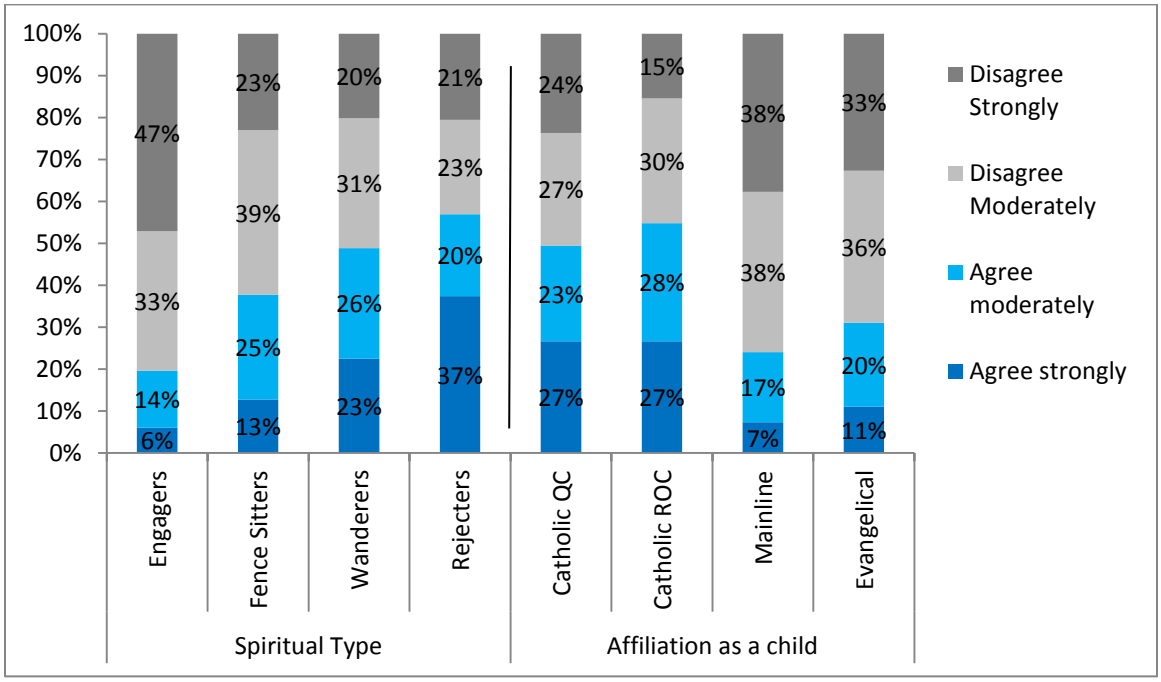
Most young adults feel women should be allowed to hold the same leadership positions as men in the church. This support is weaker among Engagers and among those who were raised in Evangelical traditions (see chart 4.15 below).

Chart 4.15. "Churches should allow women to hold the same leadership positions as men," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Those who were raised Catholic in a Quebec context are slightly more likely to support equal access to church leadership for women than those in the ROC.

Chart 4.16. "Women didn't have the rights they should have in the church I grew up in," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Those who felt that women were denied their rights in the church they were raised in were more likely to belong to a spiritual type that no longer regularly attends religious services. Those who were raised in a Catholic tradition were more likely to indicate that they felt women were denied their rights than those who were raised in Protestant traditions.

It is interesting that support for women in leadership is most tepid for Engagers and Fence Sitters – two types that also have the highest representation of females.

"I don't go anymore 'cause I find the gender roles really offensive, and I don't like having to clean up after other people just because I'm a girl … They believe in the patriarch and the man as the head of the household, I don't think they believe in birth control, and multiply and God wants kids and all that, women's place is primarily family, you can do other stuff, but primarily you are a wife and mother and all that and I don't agree with that." Aaron

Homosexuals in leadership

Young adults who are Fence Sitters, Wanderers and Rejecters report stronger support for practicing homosexuals in Christian leadership than for celibate homosexuals (compare charts 4.17 and 4.18 below). It was our hypothesis that support for celibate homosexuals in leadership would be higher than practicing homosexuals.

Why might we have found the opposite trend?

The literature review highlights acceptance as a cardinal value of young adults. Rejecting a behaviour is interpreted as rejecting the person. Alison's comment represents this common sentiment.

"My church for sure is very accepting and open about homosexuality, they're all right with all that and trying to be open-minded and correct that way, so I know they try to do that, and I don't know, it's not so much, I was kind of raised that way, to accept others." Alison

We hypothesize that young adults are, in part, responding more supportively to the participation of practicing homosexuals in Christian leadership because practicing is perceived as offering fuller expression to the totality of their self-understanding. Celibate homosexuals, by contrast, do not receive the same level of support because they are perceived to be denying what young adults understand to be the full expression of the totality of the person, that is, *being true to oneself*. It cannot be emphasized enough that for many young adults the measure of authenticity is the degree to which one is *true to oneself*. This is in contradistinction to being true to one's family, faith or other social structure. The self in its fullest expression is understood as a good for most young adults, and criticism of self is received as both nonsensical and offensive.

Chart 4.17. "Churches should allow gay and lesbian people who remain celibate to participate fully in their ministries," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child

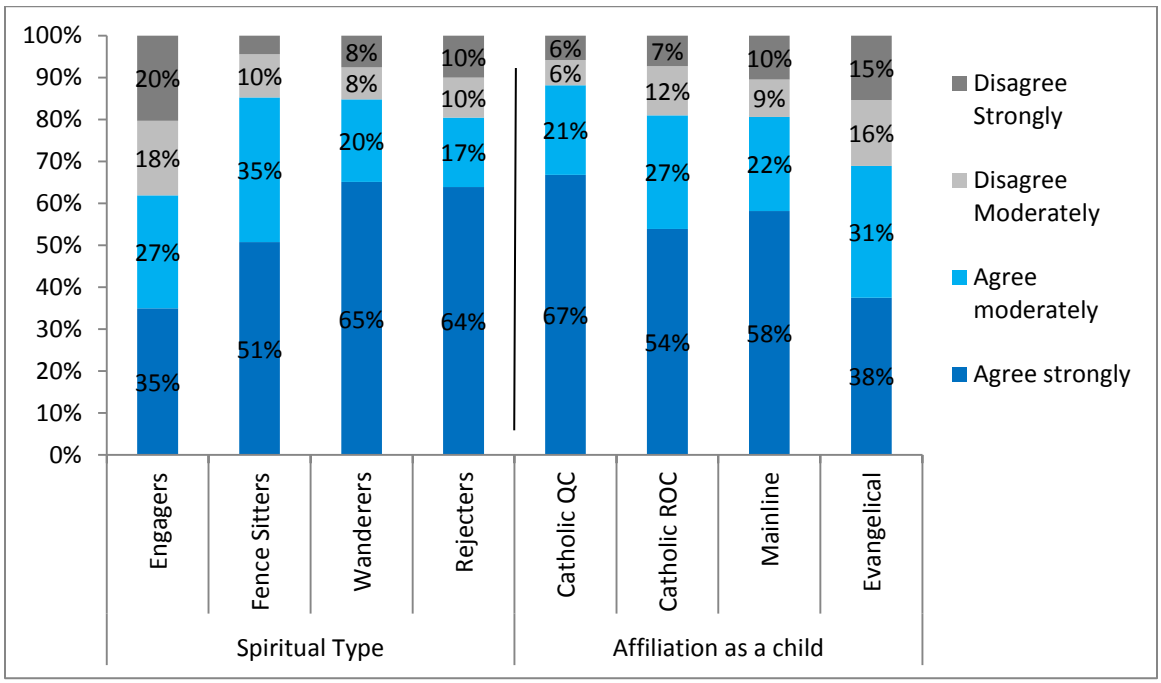
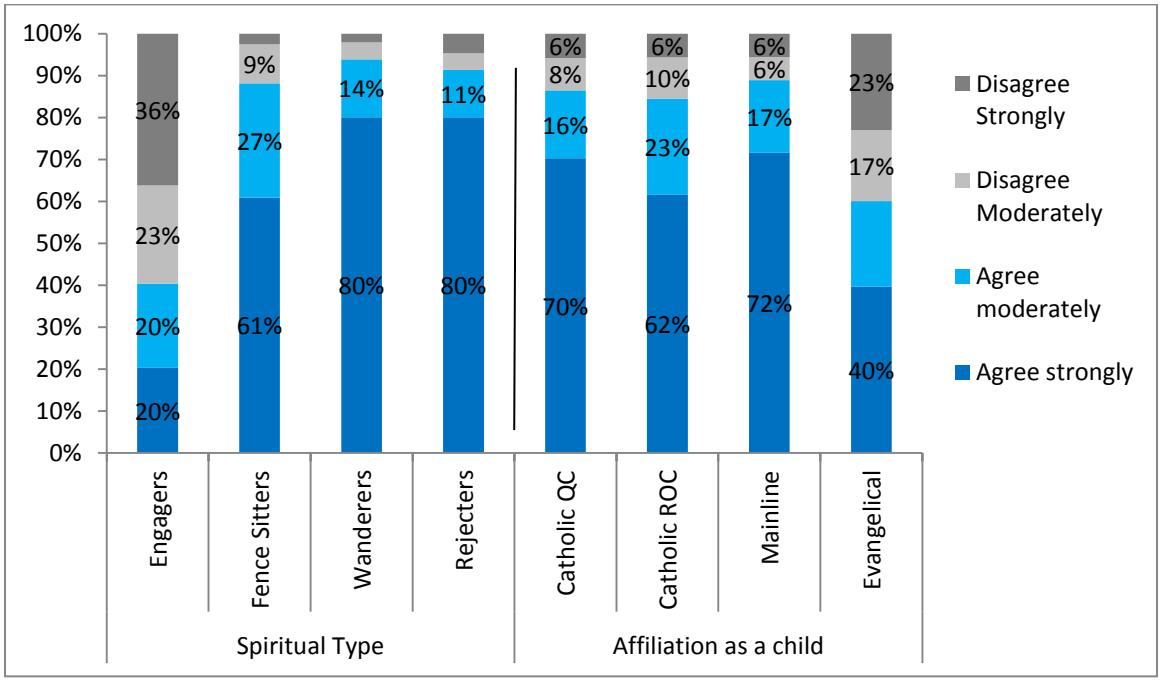


Chart 4.18. "Churches should allow people who are practicing a gay or lesbian lifestyle to participate fully in their ministries," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Support for homosexuals in Christian leadership is strongest among those who were raised in Catholic and Mainline traditions. Even among Engagers, where Evangelicals are more prominently represented, 6 in 10 support celibate homosexuals in Christian leadership and 4 in 10 support practicing homosexuals in leadership.

Consider:

> *How do churches address the challenge posed by the cultural belief that behaviour is an extension of your being?*

Most young adults want to participate – and most expect to participate in leadership. Generally speaking, young adults expect that leadership should be open to everyone and that behaviours such as homosexual practice should not exclude church members from leadership in the church. Another way to understand the strong desire for participation and leadership is to consider that young adults primarily validate their world through experience. If it cannot be experienced it cannot be confirmed to be true. Participation in the life of the church, then, is one way to confirm the essential goodness and validity of the community. Without such experiences the church is received as a presentation or show, and in the lives of young adults many presentations are thought to be merely misrepresenting reality in order to sell them something.

12

BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

"You know Jesus had been baptized, and I, on some level, I just knew that this was important. And so, yah, I told God I would like to be baptized, I would like it to be just, you know, just to be asked. Mmm, and to just do it. Um, do it that moment, and so that struck me as I was sitting there listening to, well, not really listening to, the Japanese service go on. And the man came back and asked, you know, what do you think? And I said, if I never come back to this church will you still baptize me? And he said yes, 'cause I wanted to make sure that the baptism wasn't contingent on, mmm, you know, would they give this to me even though I can't really be a part of this because I can't understand a thing.

"Right. So, he said yes and there were a handful of Japanese people, um, it was actually quite beautiful. It was on the side of a lush green hillside with the baptism tank made of terracotta with blue tiles. And you change, change into white, like a white baptismal thing with the white top and the pants didn't fit terribly well, and I was really thankful that I wasn't having my period, because, and that. Um, yah, so I went, it was all in Japanese, I just trust that it was legitimate, you know, there were big [mumbles] with washing and then I was dunked. And, ah, people, you know, were excited and shook my hands and then I got changed." Hennie

"I did youth confirmation class and, yeah, I think I was around 13. And it was good, I remember going every week for 2 months before and then they kind of told you what you were getting into and what you were doing and why it's important and stuff." Doreen

"It was really powerful because that was when, umm, I worked with, it was a small group and we met weekly. And the person who led the group was the pastor of the church. And, umm, I remember learning so much about the faith and being able to kind of just listen and hear about the faith and really think, this is how I want to live my life, and wanna, that's when I kind of made a commitment to my, to God, that I wanna spend the rest of my life learning more about him. Yeah. So it was that kind of catechesis training and that environment." June

"I found it very, very boring, dry, and, umm, very not open for discussion. It was like, this is how things are done, memorize this for next class, see you then. So yeah." Lois

"I did get baptized. It was boring. I did it to get everyone off my back to leave me alone … we were a very religious family." Carl

Baptism and confirmation are important parts of nearly all Christian traditions – baptism for all and confirmation for some.[50] Some traditions practice infant baptism while others practice adult believer's baptism. Regardless of how baptism is understood or practiced, it is a regarded as a significant event in the spiritual lives of Christians.

Confirmation is a significant event in those traditions that practice infant baptism. How do Canadian young adults understand these events? We asked questions about whether a young adult had been baptized or confirmed, whether they felt pressured to participate and how they regard their baptism or confirmation now.

Only about 4 in 10 young adults who were baptized as infants still attach significance to that baptism as young adults – this is relatively consistent across religious traditions. Confirmation usually follows in

[50] The Salvation Army does not practice baptism.

traditions where infant baptism is practiced. Chart 4.19 below indicates that confirmation tends to be held as slightly less significant than baptism.

Chart 4.19. "Does your confirmation hold significant meaning for you now?" for those who were baptized as an infant, by religious tradition

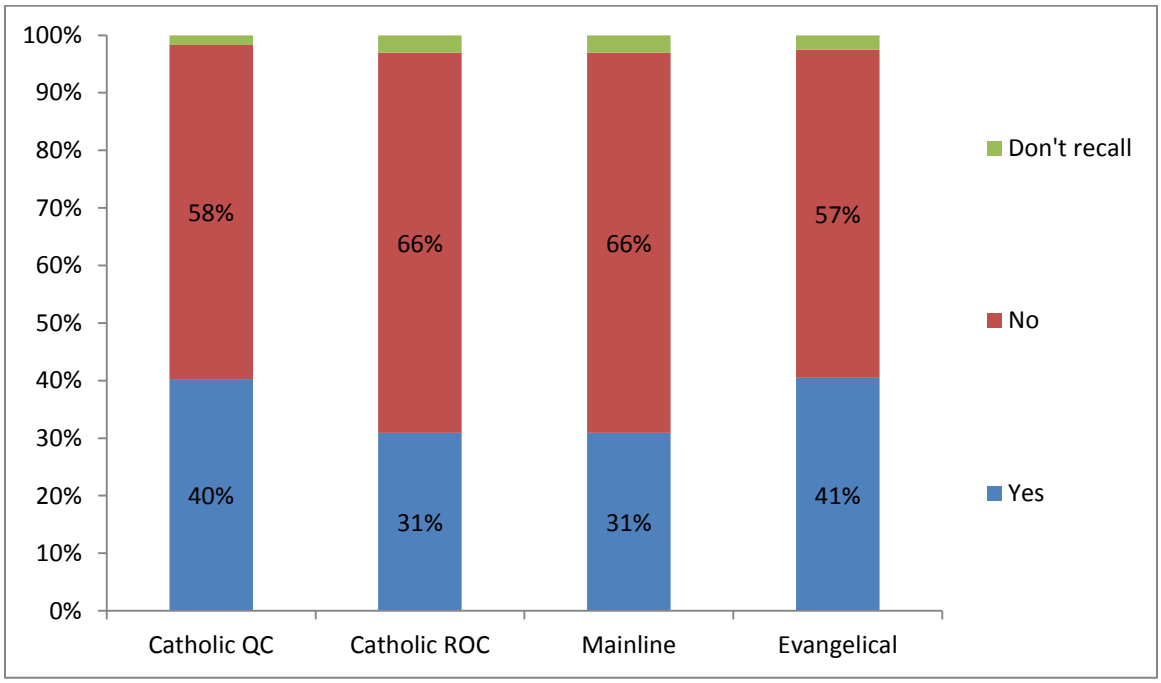
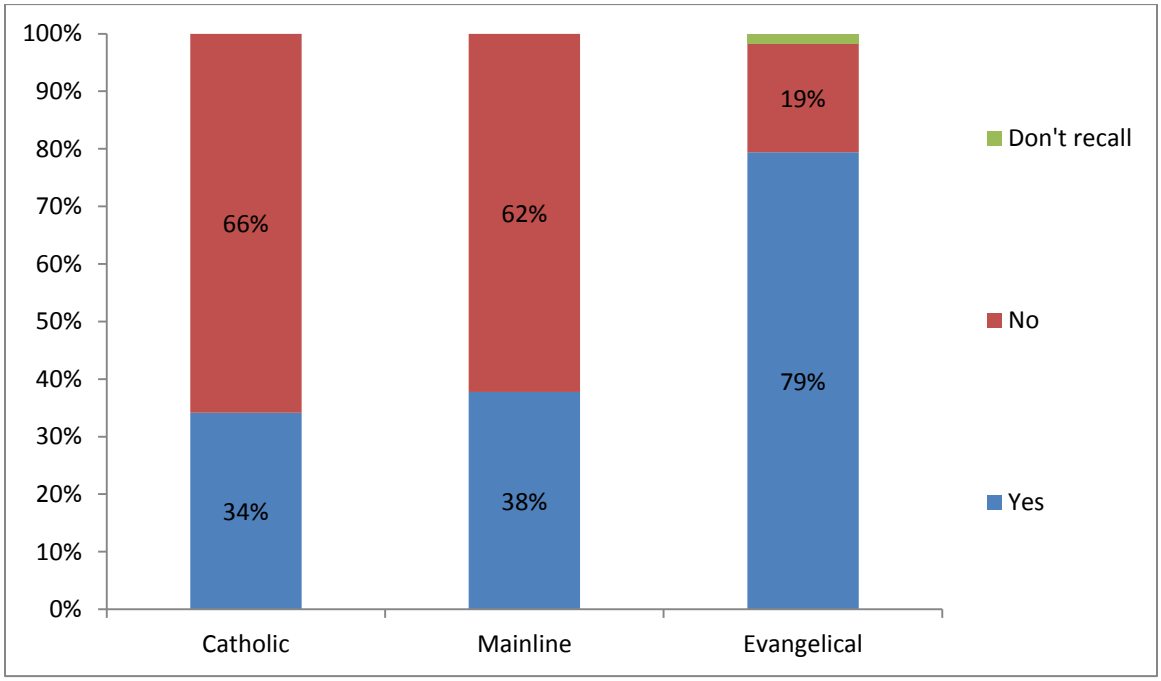


Chart 4.20. "Does your baptism hold significant meaning for you now?" for those who were baptized, but not as an infant, by religious tradition



Note: The QC and ROC data is not broken out on this table because there were only 3 respondents from QC that indicated that they had been baptized not as an infant.

Chart 4.20 above shows the significance of baptism for those who were baptized, but not as an infant. We suspect that Roman Catholic and Mainline respondents misread this question (missing the "not as an infant" qualifier). Even if we disregard the Catholic and Mainline response, we can see that the rate of significance attached to baptism is much higher for those baptized as young adults than for those who were baptized as infants.

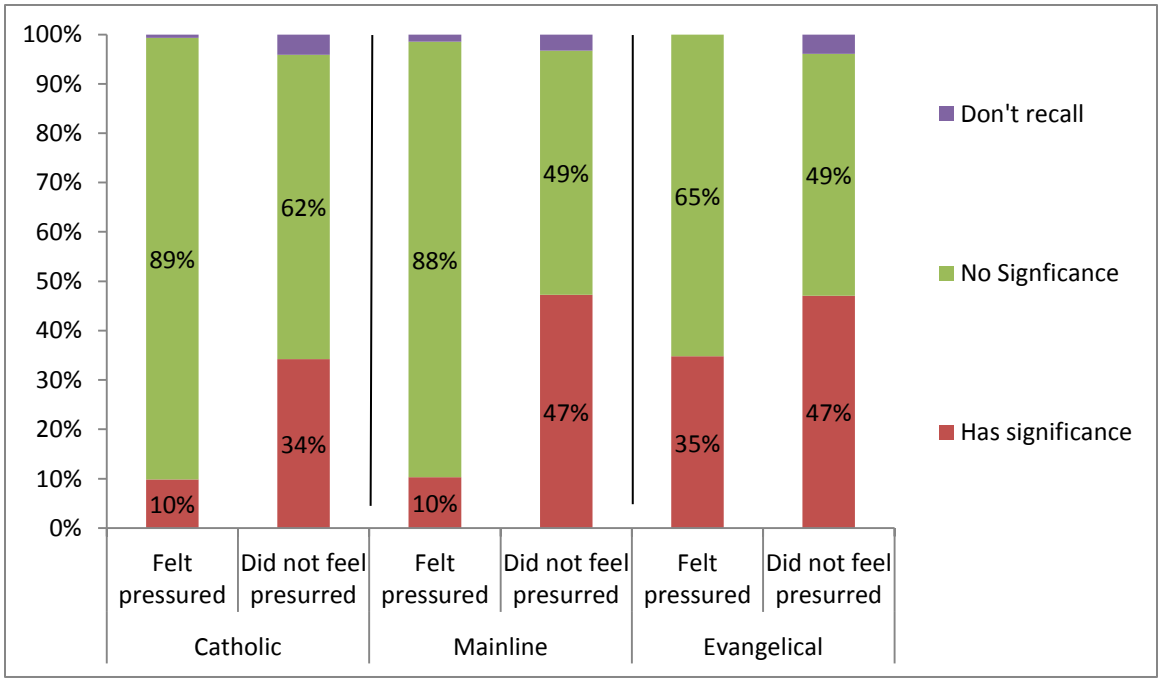
We suspect that the significance of the baptism is, in part, attributable to the direct experience the young adult had of the event, that is, what can be remembered is more significant.

Consider:

> *How can events such as infant baptism be made more experientially real to those who have no direct memories of them*?

It would appear that feeling pressured into an event like confirmation increases the likelihood that a young adult will later not attach significance to the event (see chart 4.21 below).

Chart 4.21. "Does your confirmation hold significant meaning for you now?" for those who were baptized as an infant and confirmed, by religious tradition, and whether or not they felt pressure to be confirmed



Consider:

> *How can teens be better prepared to own events such as confirmation?*

13

TURNING POINTS

Religious change typically occurs in two ways: a slow steady set of life circumstances that gradually move a person to a new religious orientation or a sudden dramatic change often described as conversion. We often define conversions as people coming to faith in Christ, that is, becoming a Christian. Many, however, are converted out of faith into a different religious outlook, even if it is an outlook such as atheism that denies God.

Many young adults are converting away from the Christian traditions they were raised in – toward something else.

In our study we asked a variety of questions about major life change. We now examine the answers to these questions to discover correlations between these life-changing events – what we will call turning points – and a movement away from the Christian traditions young adults were raised in.

We asked respondents for their level of agreement with the following statements:

- I went on a mission trip during my upbringing.
- Did your faith come alive on a mission trip?
- I went to a Christian summer camp during my upbringing.
- Did your faith come alive at summer camp?
- My faith came alive for me through the witness of a friend.
- At some point in time my church attendance declined because of my lifestyle.
- My biological parents are divorced.
- How many years old were you when your parents divorced?
- My parent(s)' church attendance declined significantly or ceased altogether while I was living at home.
- At some point in time my church attendance declined significantly due to a geographical move.
- School exposed me to new ideas that challenged my faith.
- My faith became stronger through a period of personal hardship.
- I have personally been hurt by church leaders.
- I have experienced a church split.

Camps and mission trips

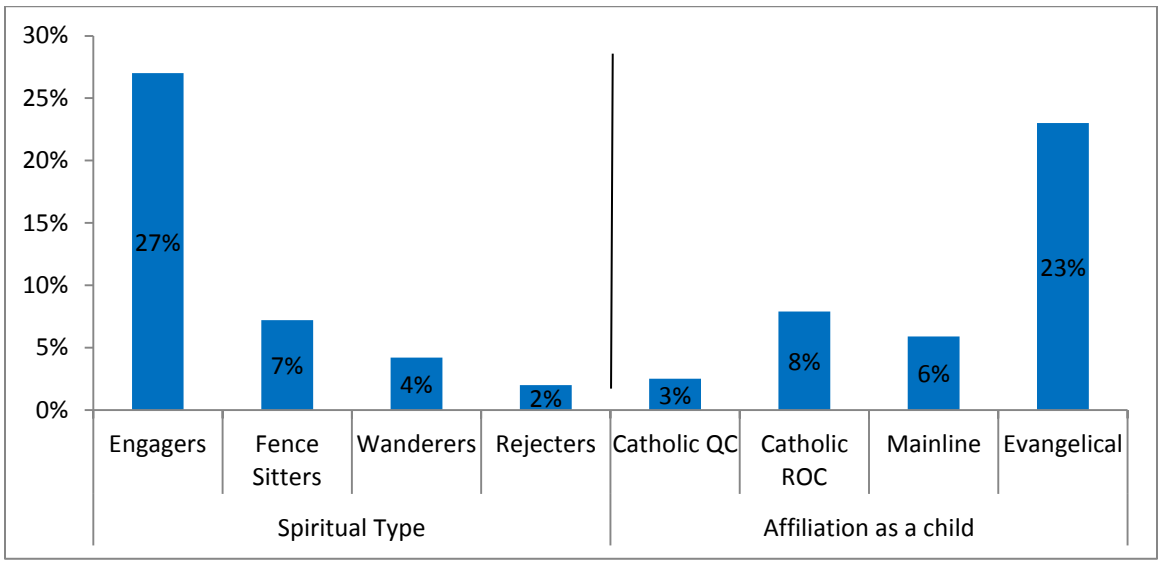
"I did my youth with a mission to Australia for six months and it was really exciting for my faith." Emma

"I do not remember one exact moment (of conversion), instead I think of that summer at camp. It was like the top of a mountain and it would have been very different without the camp. So for me it was more a journey, for I think I was always super aware of my faith and how God was important to me but it took a little push for me to integrate that into my life." Hannah

Christian summer camps and mission trips take teens and young adults out of their normal environments for a short time, with what is typically a heightened emphasis on Christian devotion and service. We asked young adults two kinds of questions. First, "Did you participate in a Christian summer camp or in a mission trip?" Second, "Did your faith come alive while you were participating?"

Only 1 in 10 young adults who were raised Christian indicated that they travelled on a mission trip. Only about 1 in 20 of those raised in Catholic or Mainline traditions experienced a mission trip; however, those raised Catholic in the rest of Canada were more likely to have gone on a mission trip than those raised in Quebec. One in 4 who were raised in an Evangelical tradition reported participation in a mission trip (see chart 4.22 below)

Chart 4.22. "I went on a mission trip during my upbringing," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child

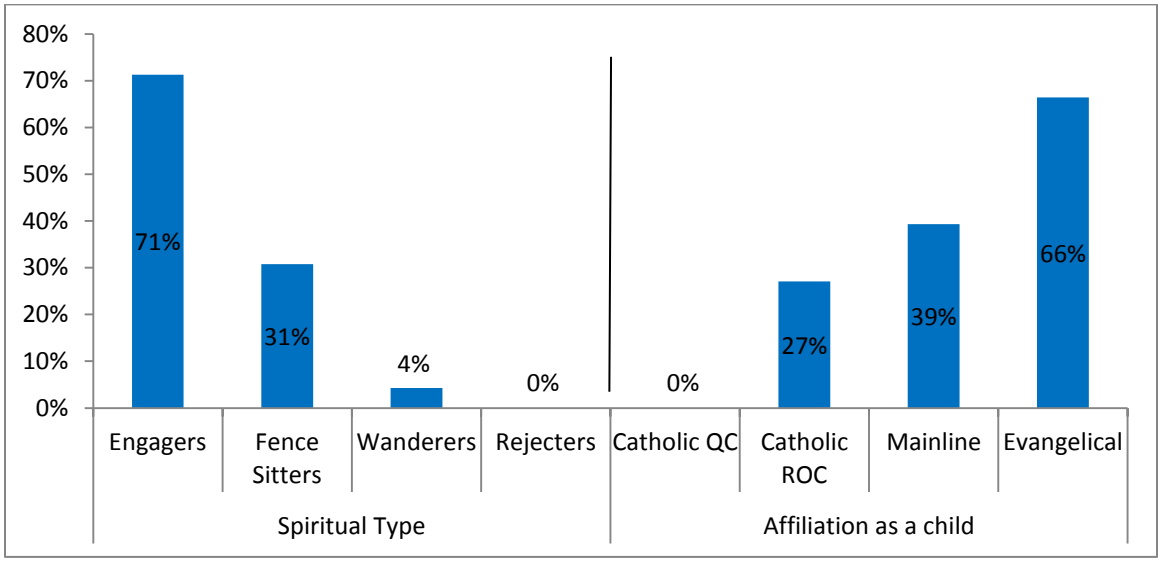


Note: Only 9 of 364 respondents who were raised as Quebec Catholics went on a mission trip during their upbringing.

Those who were raised Catholic were the least likely to say that their faith came alive on the trip, while those raised in an Evangelical tradition were the most likely (see chart 4.23 below). When we examine spiritual types we find that Engagers, followed by the Fence Sitters, were the most likely to describe their faith coming alive on a mission trip.

It is significant that 7 in 10 of Engagers who went on a mission trip indicated that their faith came alive. This does not mean that 7 in 10 people who go on a mission trip will experience a spiritual awakening. It indicates that of those who when on a mission trip, 7 in 10 of those who ended up in the Engagers spiritual type had their faith come alive through that experience.

Chart 4.23. "[My faith came] alive on a mission trip," for those who indicated that they went on a mission trip, by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child

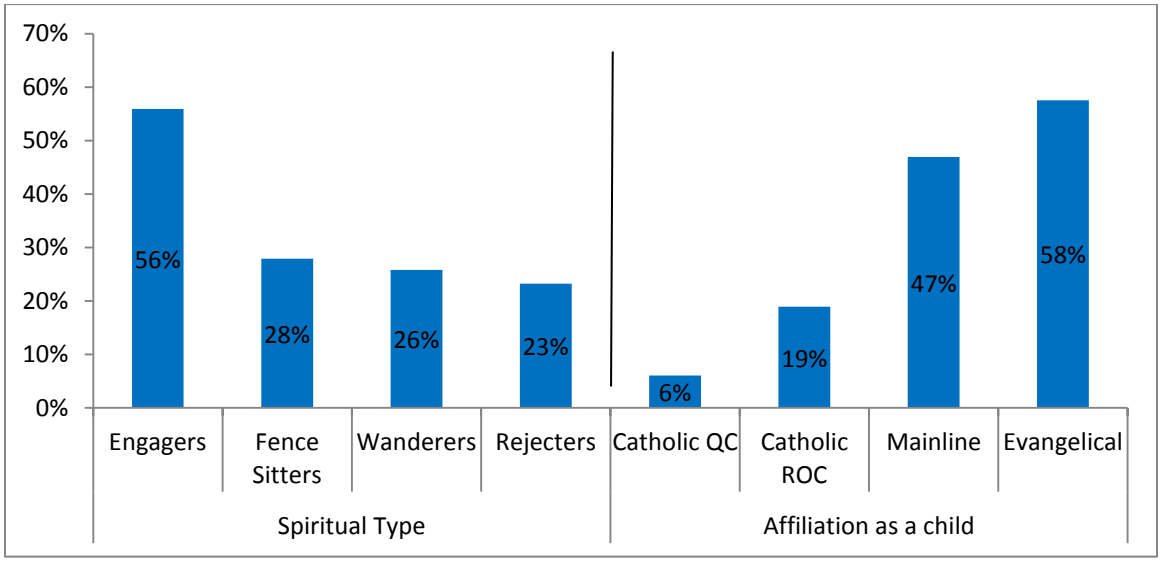


Note: Only 9 of 364 respondents who were raised as Quebec Catholics went on a mission trip during their upbringing.

We cannot say that mission trips cause spiritual awakenings. What we can say is that where spiritual awakenings do happen on mission trips, those young adults are more likely to become Engagers.

One in three of our respondents attended a Christian summer camp. Those raised in a Protestant tradition were three to four times more likely to have attended a Christian summer camp than those raised in the Catholic tradition (see chart 4.24 below).

Chart 4.24. "I went to a Christian summer camp during my upbringing," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child

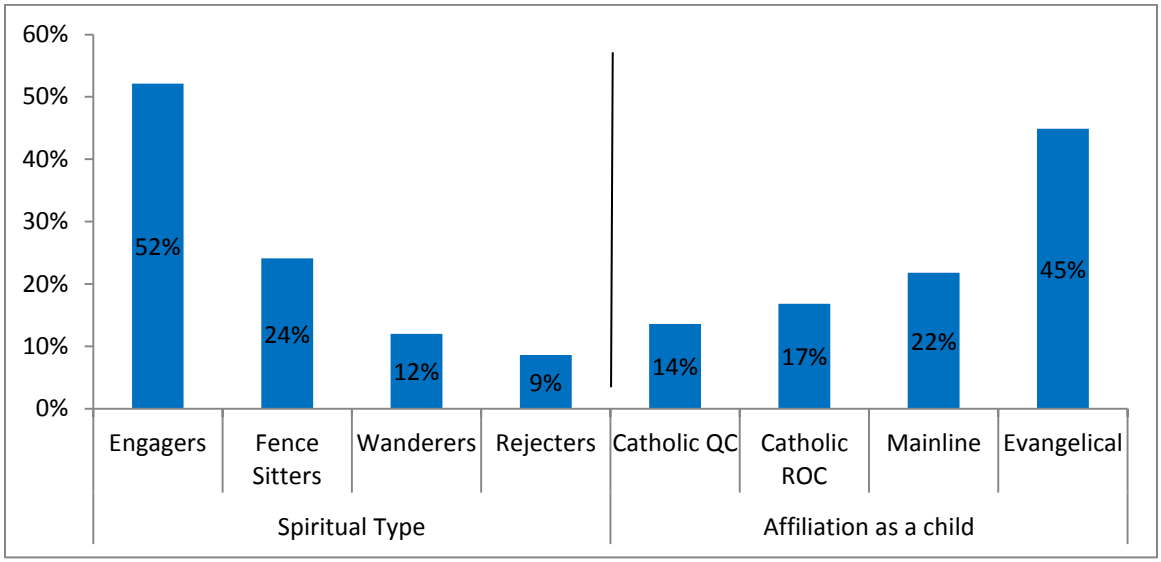


Usually if Engagers score high on a scale the scores will decline through Fence Sitters to Wanderers, ending with Rejecters possessing the lowest score. The converse also tends to be true. In looking at the distribution of participation in summer camp across the types, we view a different pattern. While slightly

more than half of Engagers had a Christian summer camp experience, only 25% of the other spiritual types did.

Half of Engagers who went to Christian summer camp indicated that their faith came alive there. For Engagers as a whole, 1 in 4 had a Christian summer camp experience where their faith came alive. By comparison, only about 1 in 15 Fence Sitters, 1 in 30 Wanderers and 1 in 50 Rejecters indicated the same. Slightly more than 1 in 4 young adults who were raised in an Evangelical tradition saw their faith come alive at summer camp, compared to 1 in 10 raised in Mainline tradition and 1 in 50 raised Catholic.

Chart 4.25. "[My faith came] alive at summer camp," for those who indicated that they attended summer camp, by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Note: There were only 22 Quebec respondents who were raised Catholic that attended a Christian summer camp. Use this statistic with caution.

Consider:

> *Why might those who were raised in different Christian traditions have such different rates of spiritual awakening at Christian summer camps?*

Friends

"What helped me was that the school was 90% Haitian and I could see that many of the other students were Christian and listened to gospel music … I hung out with about 5 to 6 Haitian Christians, a good group, and I also had a Christian prof, he was against evolution and he knew I was a Christian … Natasha, my best friend, came to Christ because I took lessons in explosive evangelization … I really had a big heart for people and I prefer evangelizing to praying because talking about God to others, that's how I get closer to God. I spoke about it and I wasn't embarrassed. Three of my friends came to Christ, only one was left." Lea

Friends have a significant influence in the lives of teens and young adults. In this section we consider the level of agreement of young adults with two statements. The first is tightly linked to friends:

- My faith came alive for me through the witness of a friend.

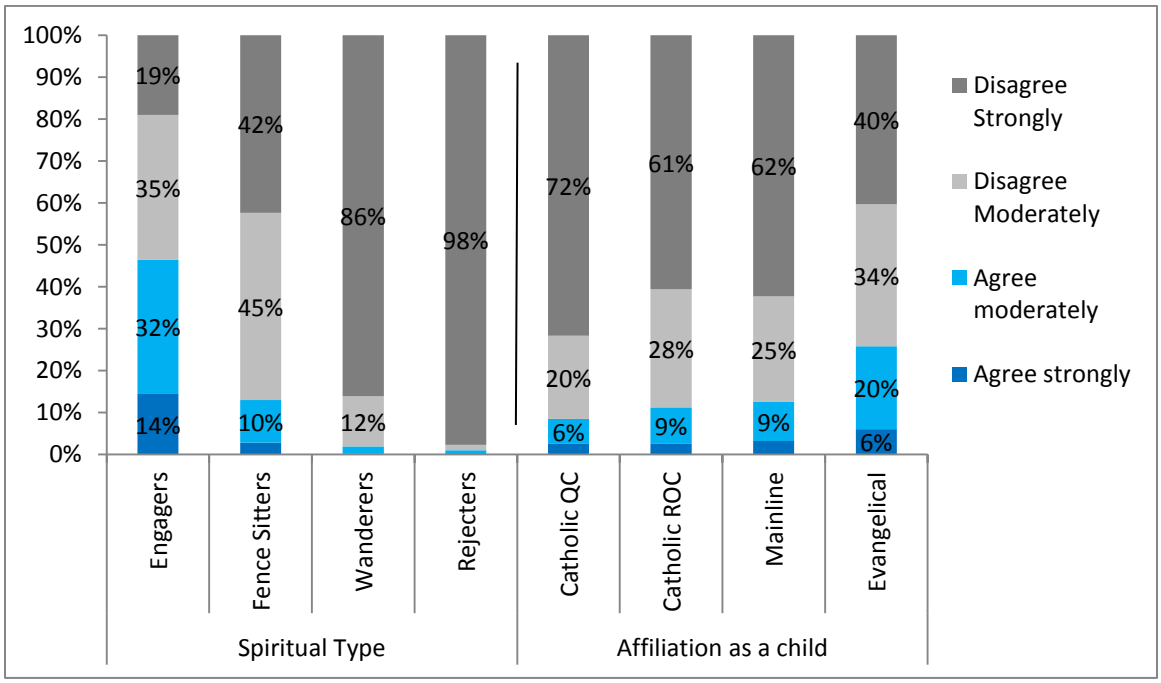
The second does not mention friends specifically, but signifies the significant influence that friends have over the lifestyle choices of teens and young adults.

- At some point in time my church attendance declined because of my lifestyle.

Friends tend to socialize members of the group into the beliefs and behaviours of the group. While not negating the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith, unless the Christian faith is a vibrant part of one's group of friends, one is unlikely to be influenced toward the Christian faith by those friends.

Chart 4.26 below indicates that the influence of friends toward a spiritual awakening was strongest among Engagers. This level of influence across spiritual types closely mirrors the rate of attendance at religious services. We believe that we are viewing the influence of social groups where Christian belief and practice is either present or absent. You tend to become like the people you spend the most time with. The reported influence of friends toward the Christian faith is not as strong as the influence of either participating in mission trips or participating in a Christian summer camp. We believe this is because the level of Christian socialization tends to be stronger on mission trips and at summer camps than in most young adults' regular peer groups.

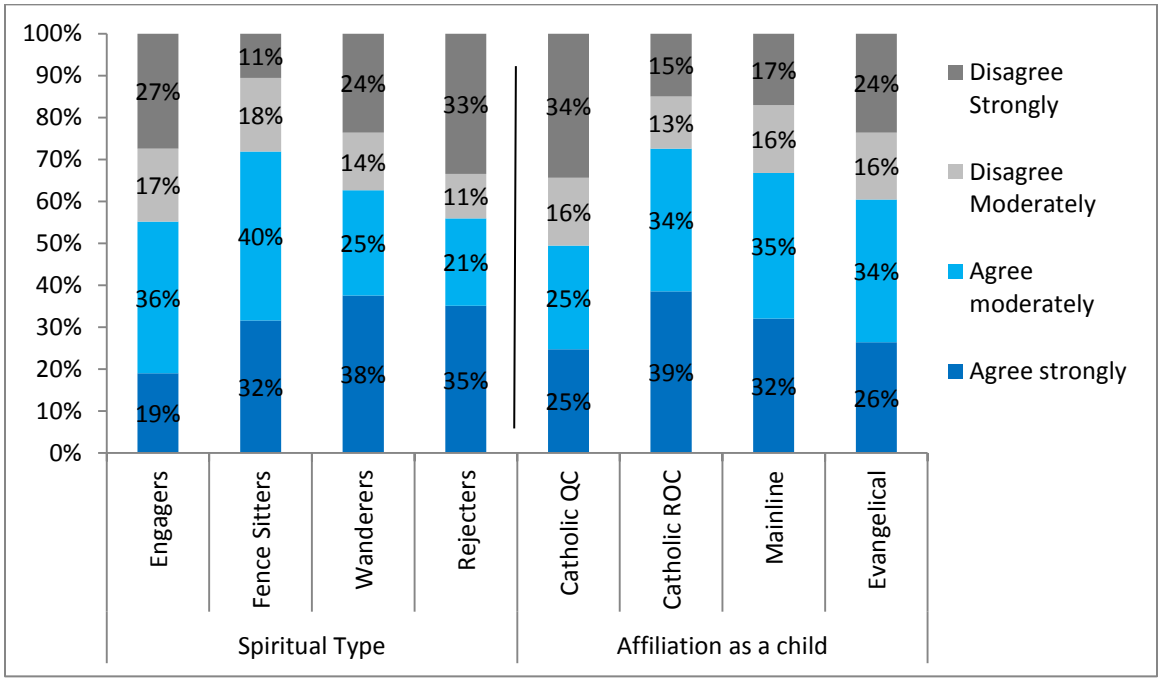
Chart 4.26. "My faith came alive for me through the witness of a friend," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



More than half of young adults indicated that their church attendance declined at some point because of their lifestyle – even among Engagers. Those who have tended to stop attending church, Wanderers and Rejecters, were the most likely to indicate that lifestyle conflicts led to decreased attendance. Those who were raised Catholic in Quebec were slightly less likely to have reported a decrease in attendance because of their lifestyle but this is likely because they tend to attend less frequently to begin with (see chart 4.27 below).

"I started to follow the wrong crowd and be, I guess if you want to say, mentored by the wrong mentor and I lost my way. I can't blame him for that or the guys I worked with because I could have said no, but because you work with them you look up to them and you start to follow a path that you didn't realize you could ever end up on" John

Chart 4.27. "At some point in time my church attendance declined because of my lifestyle," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Consider:

> *Why do young adults tend to resolve their lifestyle conflicts with the church by reducing their attendance?*

Parental divorce

"Well, just the issues, umm, surrounding my parents' separation and that kind of stuff. And some of the deep hurt that went along with that, like because there was accusations and, you know, one side denies, and one supports them, but it was definitely a case of being caught in the middle between your parents. And so that was a hard time and so ... There was a time after that where there was a bit of rebellion and I got into drinking and some things like that." Roy.

"Anyway and then we moved to a different town, my parents split up, really tumultuous, emotional time. Um, and my mom had started going to a new church. And I had a really hard time, um, try, fitting in." Stella

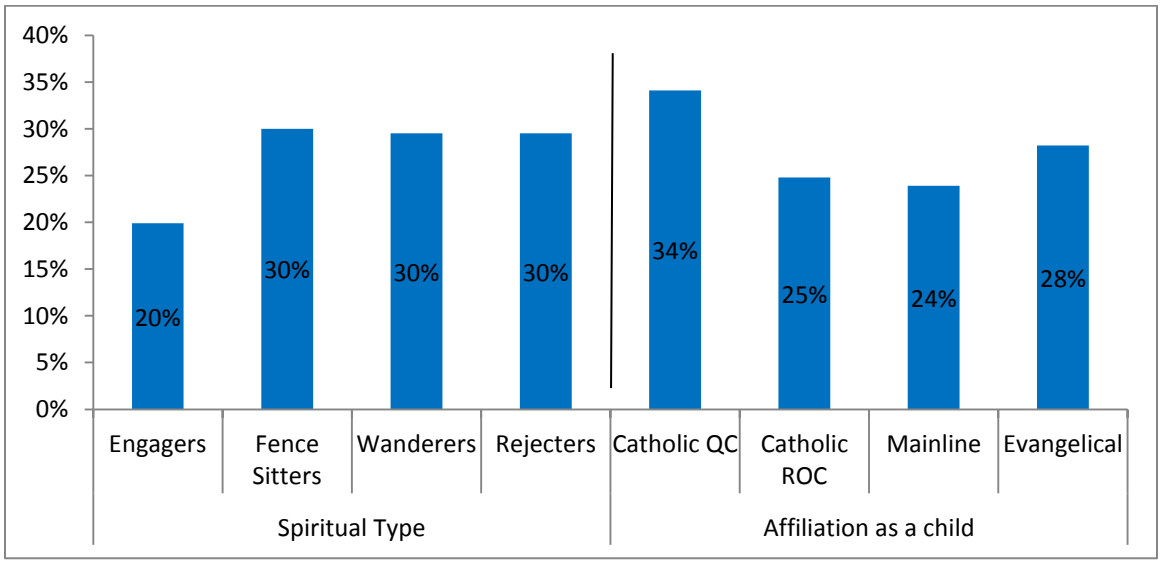
"My parents separated when I was seven, so, that definitely had an impact on my growing up. And a lot of longing I had for, like, a secure male figure in my life and just to feel loved and safe. Um, so, that had a large imprint on me. That was one relationship, that whole dynamic, when my, my dad left." Jasmine

Study after study indicates that parents are usually the most significant spiritual influence in their teen's lives. It is reasonable, then, to expect that changes to parents' marital status or their rate of attendance would influence the spiritual lives of their children.

Divorce seems to have had the same prevalence for young adults regardless of Christian tradition, although the parents of young adults raised in Mainline or Catholic ROC traditions were slightly more likely to stay together (see chart 4.28 below). We did not ask about the marital status of parents. So we do not know, for example, if their parents lived common-law and were never married. Therefore, it is

difficult to make strong conclusions from this set of data. We can observe that the young adults who ended up in the Engagers spiritual type were less likely to have had biological parents who were divorced.

Chart 4.28. "My biological parents are divorced," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child

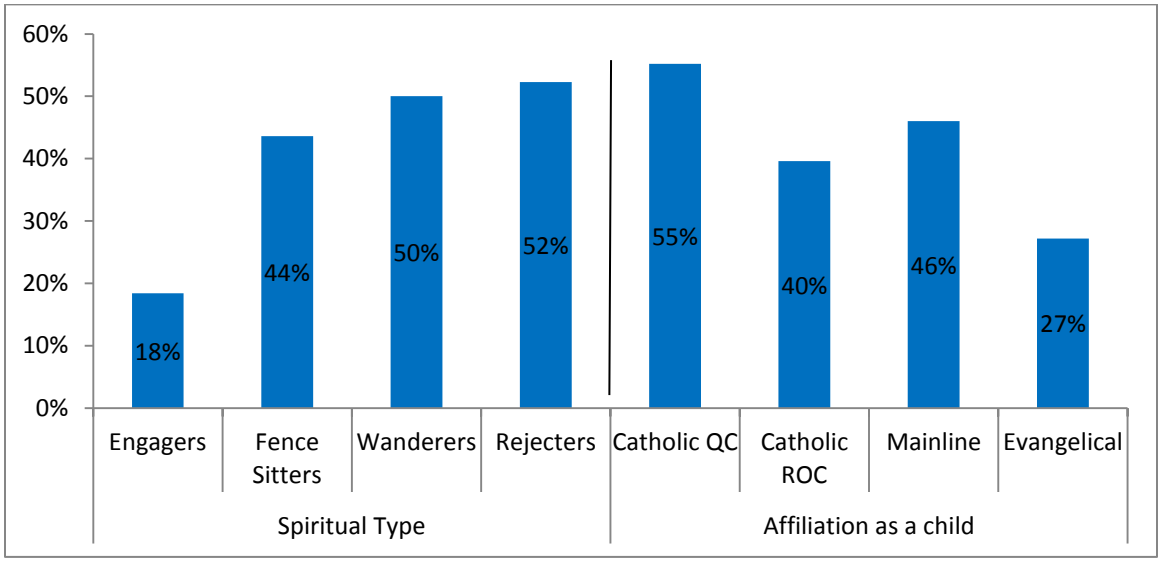


The decrease or cessation of church attendance on the part of the parents during childhood appears to be a turning point in the lives of young adults. Generally speaking, we cannot report that one of two things that are related (correlated) caused the other.

If there is a causal relationship between changes in parents' attendance patterns while growing up and spiritual type as an adult – and we believe there most probably is – it would appear that the parents' decline in church attendance reduces the likelihood that young adults will belong to a spiritual type that attends religious services. If parents stop attending, it is likely that their children will also stop attending. Parents are, after all, usually those who accompany their children to church. A turning point in religious service attendance of parents is often a turning point for their children (see chart 4.29 below).

Examining the same chart, we can observe that the parents of young adults who were raised in an Evangelical tradition were less likely to cease or dramatically scale back their attendance at religious services than those from other traditions.

Chart 4.29. "My parent(s)' church attendance declined significantly or ceased altogether while I was living at home," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Major life transitions

"I tried a new church (after moving to a new city). I invested time in the young adults, in the youth and in – even time with the pastors, and I just never felt connected to the community there, never felt connected to the group … (so I concluded) it's time to move on. Let's find relationships elsewhere." Jay

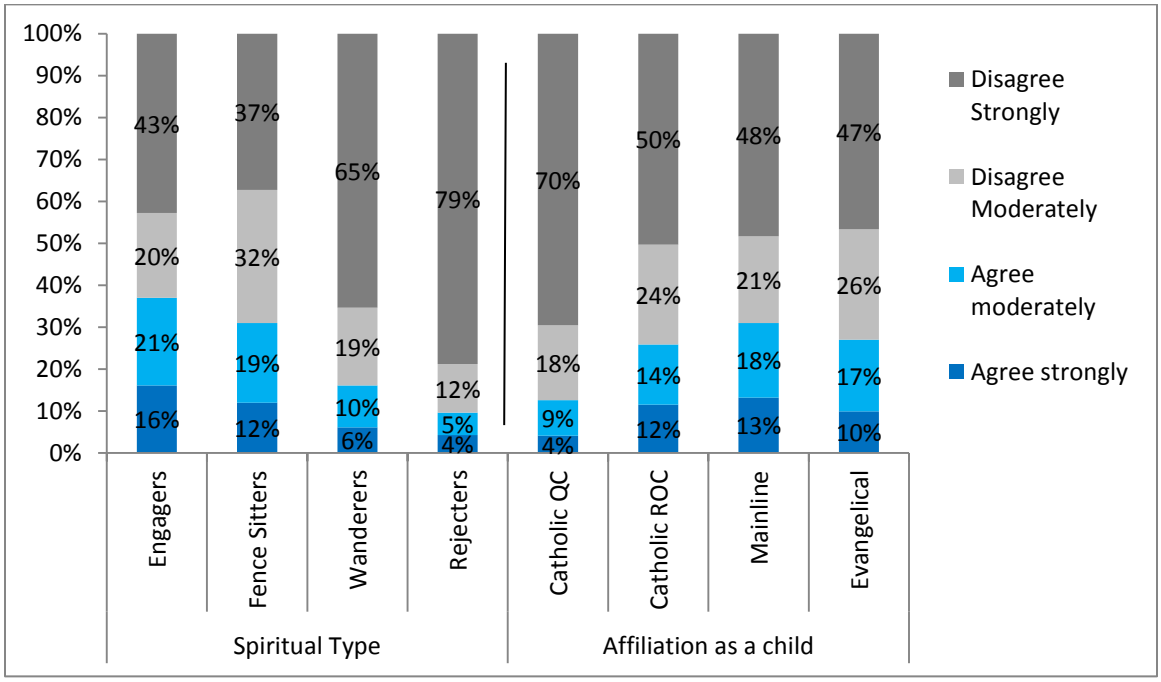
The literature points to major life transitions as times when young adults are likely to leave church. Transitions tend to pull people out of old social groups and place them in new ones. A transition from the parental home was the most common answer given to an open-ended question asking respondents what was happening in their lives when they stopped going to church. In many cases the move from the parental home was to college or university.

We had two further questions that tried to measure the impact of these transitions:

- At some point in time my church attendance declined significantly due to a geographical move.
- School exposed me to new ideas that challenged my faith.

When we asked about the effect of a geographical move on a decline in attendance we found that, similar to the effect of lifestyle conflicts on church attendance discussed above, Engagers were most likely to indicate experiencing a decline in attendance (see chart 4.30 below). The most likely explanation lies in their prior, more regular attendance. When a move did take place, their attendance frequency declined. Those who attended infrequently before a move continued the same pattern after a move. If this question were repeated in a subsequent survey, we would attempt to establish the frequency of attendance both before and after the move.

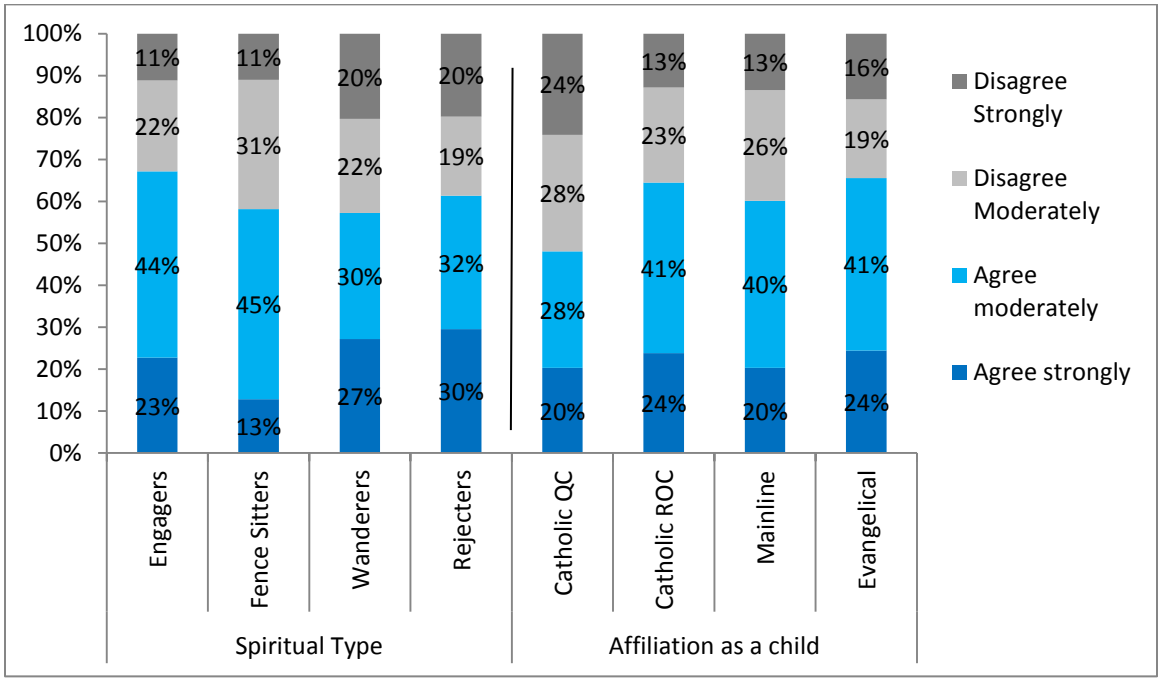
Chart 4.30. "At some point in time my church attendance declined significantly due to a geographical move," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



When examining the influence of school and new ideas that might challenge faith, we restricted our analysis to the 849 of 2,049 respondents who possessed a university degree.

Generally, we were surprised at how little variation existed across the spiritual types and the traditions young adults were raised in as children. Level of education does not appear to correlate with different spiritual outcomes. While about 3 in 10 Wanderers and Rejecters strongly agreed that the new ideas at school challenged their faith, this is markedly similar to the responses of Engagers. We cannot determine why some young adults respond to the challenges to faith posed by a university education by leaving church and others respond by staying.

Chart 4.31. "School exposed me to new ideas that challenged my faith," for those with a university degree, by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



Conflicts and hardship

"We moved to the bigger church when I was eleven … coming to that church taught me a lot about expectations and weirdness, church politics, 'cause dad had been asked to resign. The entire church was shocked, 'cause the church board of deacons had done it all on their own. There was almost a church split and three quarters wanted to come with him and dad said no." Gary

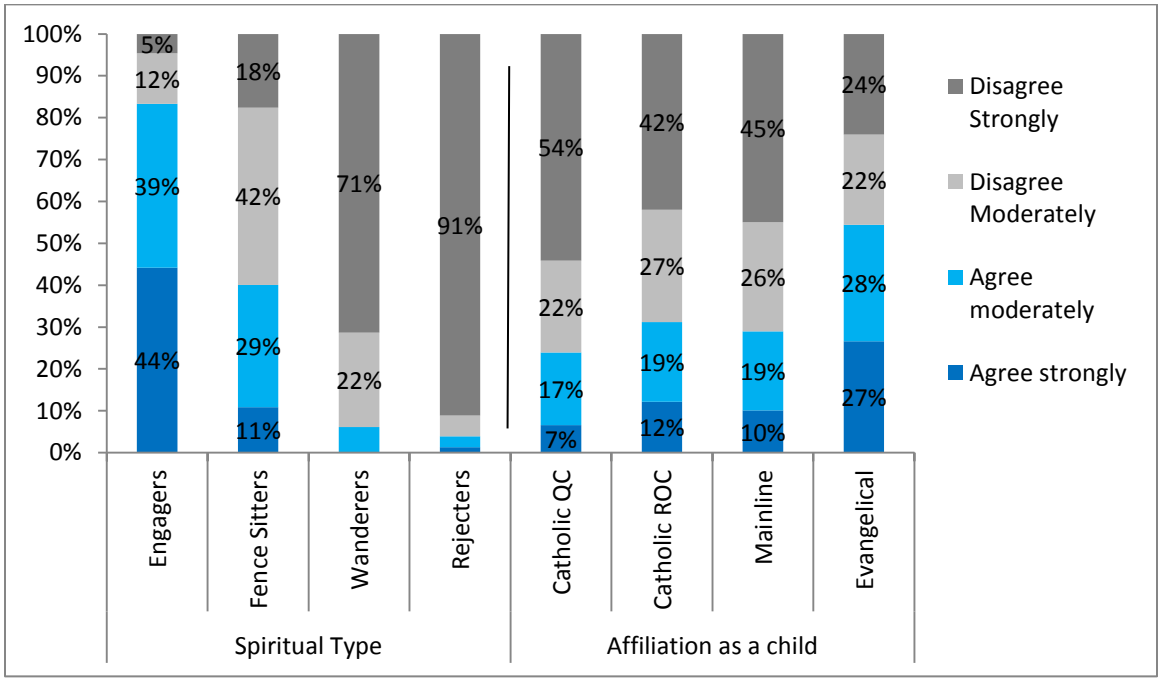
Wounds leave scars. Emotional ones are no different. To attempt to determine what the effect of conflicts and hardship were on the spiritual lives of young adults, we asked respondents to tell us how strongly they agreed with the following three statements:

- My faith became stronger through a period of personal hardship.
- I have personally been hurt by church leaders.
- I have experienced a church split.

Four out of 5 Engagers report experiencing a period of personal hardship that strengthened their faith. Two out of 5 Fence Sitters said the same. These are the groups that maintain at least some meaningful engagement with the church. Wanderers or Rejecters, by contrast, have either not experienced periods of personal hardship or, if they have, those periods have not strengthened their faith (see chart 4.32 below).

Those raised in an Evangelical tradition are twice as likely to say that a period of hardship strengthened their faith than those raised in other traditions.

Chart 4.32. "My faith became stronger through a period of personal hardship," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



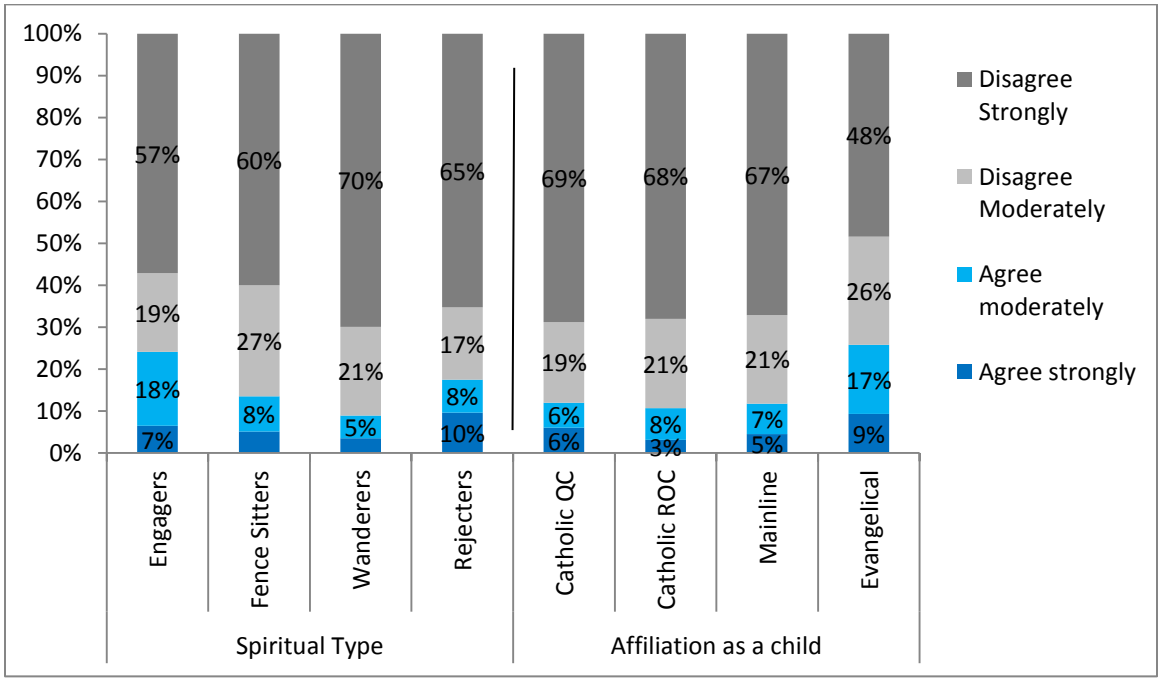
Consider:

What causes some people's faith to strengthen through hardship and others' faith to weaken?

Few young adults say they have been personally hurt by church leaders. This could indicate that relationships with church leaders are more or less congenial or that there has not been significant interaction between church leaders and young adults.

Both Engagers and Rejecters reported the highest rate of being hurt by church leaders. We suspect the dominant reason for each group is different. With Engagers, they are more likely to be in contact with church leaders than the other group. Their higher rate of attendance at religious services would result in closer contact. Rejecters, by contrast, are seldom in church where they would be in contact with church leaders. We suspect that when they report that they've been hurt by church leaders they are referring to an incident in the past that became a turning point for them (see chart 4.33 below). We should remember that we are only dealing with a quarter of Rejecters. Even so, it would appear that conflict with church leaders is one of the reasons some Rejecters now find themselves disconnected from the church.

Chart 4.33. "I have personally been hurt by church leaders," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



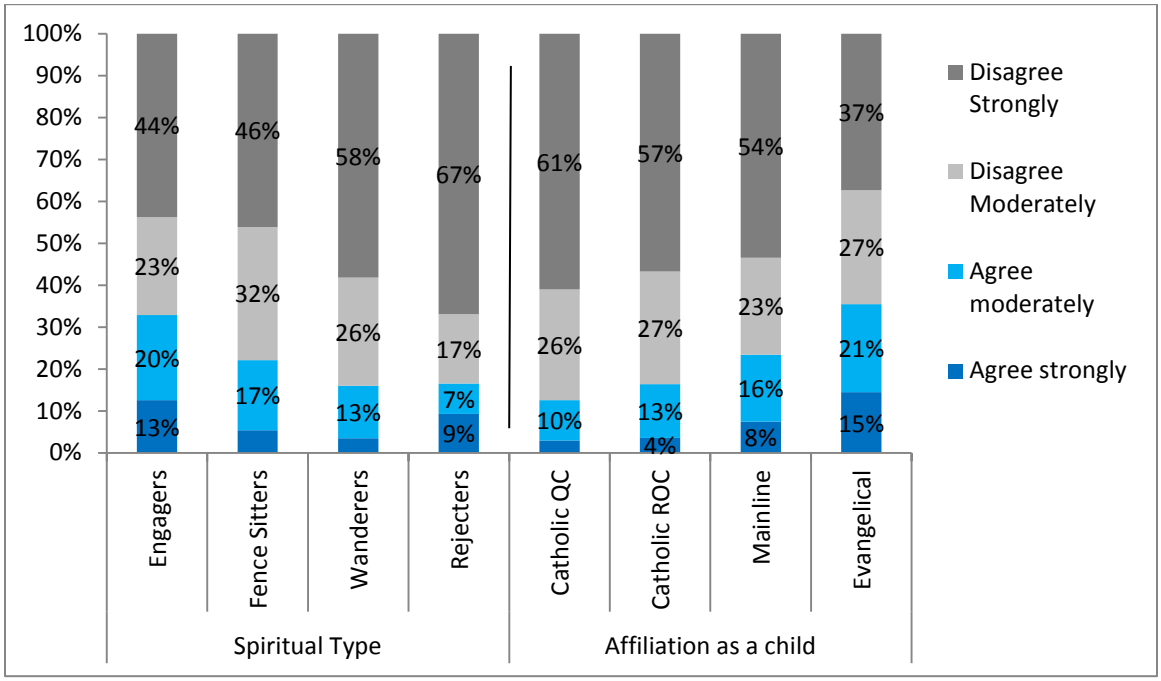
Those from Evangelical traditions report a higher rate of conflict with church leaders than those raised in other church traditions. An important reason for this higher incidence of conflict, we believe, arises from the higher rate of church attendance among those from Evangelical traditions.

Consider:

> *What mechanisms or processes in place in our churches would allow young adults and church leaders to resolve a disagreement?*

Young adults raised in Protestant traditions, and especially Evangelical ones, were more likely to report an experience of a church split than those who were raised Catholic. As with other questions dealing with church participation, those who are more likely to attend religious services are also those who are more likely to have experienced a church split (see chart 4.34 below). Rejecters are still more likely to strongly agree that they have experienced a church split than Wanderers. This, along with their responses to the question about being hurt by church leaders, suggests that for a minority of Rejecters church conflict is a part of the reason why they no longer attend.

Chart 4.34. "I have experienced a church split," by spiritual type and religious tradition as a child



We have examined responses to several questions that we believed would help us understand spiritual turning points in the lives of young adults. Mission trips and Christian summer camp experiences are positively correlated with active participation in the church as young adults, although only a minority of young adults participates in these activities.

Our research on the effect of divorce on the spiritual lives of children was inconclusive, although it is clear that when parents reduce their religious service attendance it establishes patterns that their children will tend to follow.

Many of the questions about congregational life were difficult to assess. We were unable to control for religious participation before and after the events we were attempting to evaluate. It is clear that for an important minority of Rejecters conflict in the church is a reason they no longer participate in church life.

The experience of personal hardship is undoubtedly a turning point for many young adults. However it appears that hardship can both strengthen and hinder faith.

An important follow up study could examine why the faith of some is strengthened by hardship while the faith of others is weakened. From the data collected in this survey, mission trips, Christian summer camp experience, conflict in the church and the experience of personal hardship are the most significant potential turning points in the spiritual lives of young adults.

Part V

REFLECTIONS

14

THE INSIGHTS OF THE THINK TANK

Much of the report on the Hemorrhaging Faith research project is focused on the research findings themselves. These findings are not, however, an end in themselves; rather, they point to a series of implications and responses that will help churches and ministry organizations develop effective strategies for engaging youth and young adults in the church into the future.

This part of the research report addresses implications and responses to the Hemorrhaging Faith research, as expressed by participants in a think tank that was organized by the EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable and held May 2 to 4, 2012. More than 35 church and ministry organization leaders gathered to listen to presentations of the research findings by three of the researchers – James Penner, Rachael Harder and Rick Hiemstra – and to engage in reflective conversations with others.

The chapter is organized around three basic questions: What have we learned? What are the implications of what we have learned? What new paradigms and practices should we develop in response to the implications of what we have learned?

The responses to the three basic questions outlined below are based on notes from the Think Tank discussions, and are grouped into six major categories, as follows:

- Patterns in Hemorrhaging Faith
- Discipleship
- Belonging and Community
- Mission and Leadership
- Parenting
- Strategies for Youth Ministry

Patterns in Hemorrhaging Faith

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

We learned that there are some significant patterns in why and when Canadian young adults are leaving, staying or returning to church, including:

- We are losing more young people between childhood and adolescence than between adolescence and young adult years.
- More young males are leaving the church than young females.
- Young people are strongly impacted by the digital age.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

The patterns that we believed to be of high significance had several implications for the ways we think about engaging young adults in the church and for how we do so, including:

- The transition years to middle school, junior high, and high school are highly stressful – many churches don't expect and plan for supporting kids through these transitions.
- Boys lack male role models in the church and are not as challenged in their experience of faith and church as they need to be.
- Gaming and social media involvement distracts youth and young adults from church engagement.

WHAT NEW PARADIGMS AND PRACTICES SHOULD WE DEVELOP IN RESPONSE?

- Churches could learn from immigrant communities about ways to develop a "rites-of-passage" approach to keeping youth and young adults engaged in the church during significant transition times.
- We may need to develop programs for boys and young men that are different from programs for girls and young women.
- Digital entertainment and social media networks can be used as a means of catalyzing the faith development of young people.

Discipleship

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

We learned that one of the most critical factors determining the engagement of youth and young adults in the church is their experience of their faith and their walk with God. Specifically, we learned that:

- Those who are found in the Wanderers and Rejecters categories report that they have never experienced the love of God and answered prayer.
- Those who resist engagement in the church report the lack of space to ask questions about their faith.
- Many youth and young adults want to connect to authentic expressions of faith.
- Many youth and young adults who are engaged in church activities do not understand the gospel at a deep level.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

What we learned has implications for our approach to discipleship ministry with youth and young adults, including:

- For significant numbers of youth and young adults, churches are not places where they expect to experience the love of God and answered prayer.
- For significant numbers of youth and young adults, churches are not places where they are able to ask questions about the content of their faith and how to live it out.
- Many youth and young adults are desperate to see communities of faith live out, both privately and publicly, what they talk about.
- We may be presenting a superficial understanding of the gospel to youth and young adults.

WHAT NEW PARADIGMS AND PRACTICES SHOULD WE DEVELOP IN RESPONSE?

- We need to create environments where youth and young adults can better experience the love of God and answered prayer by helping them to recognize "God events" in their lives. To do this, we need to better understand the spiritual formation of young adults from childhood onwards.
- We need to acknowledge that we don't have all the answers, and encourage discussions in which young people are free to share openly.
- An approach to living the faith that involves passing on the faith to one's children in everyday life will help them to live out the gospel in tangible ways.
- We must repent of transmitting a consumeristic "easy road" understanding of the gospel and seek instead through mentoring and an emphasis on prayer to involve youth and young adults in God's story as it has been told through the ages. Practices such as *lectio divina* (in which the steps are to read, meditate, pray and contemplate) may reveal aspects of Scripture that would be less obvious through a more rigid approach.

Belonging and community

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- Youth and young adults who are not engaged in the church have not experienced a sense of belonging and community in their church contexts.
- Many young adults have experienced criticism and judgment at the hands of older people in the church.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

- Part of the problem is that we have separated children and young people from the adults in the church.
- Another difficulty is that, for many young people, any criticism is personal, and directed not only against their actions but also their sense of self-worth and personhood.

WHAT NEW PARADIGMS AND PRACTICES SHOULD WE DEVELOP IN RESPONSE?

- We need to find ways to talk about faith in the context of trusted relationships and experiential learning.
- Attempts to guide young adults to think differently about their lifestyles must be grounded in strong relationships – intentional mentoring relationships that cross generations will be especially helpful.

Mission and leadership

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- Young adults are more likely to stay engaged in the church if they are directly involved in the missional activities of the church.
- Young adults who are not engaged in the church complain about a lack of interest that was shown in relation to their contribution to the work of the church.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

- We aren't challenging young adults to use their gifts and find community in mission.
- We are neglecting opportunities for leadership development as young adults become involved in the mission of the church.

WHAT NEW PARADIGMS AND PRACTICES SHOULD WE DEVELOP IN RESPONSE?

- We should leverage activities, e.g., sports, which might otherwise be seen as drawing youth and young adults away from traditional church activities, into missional opportunities. By giving them experience in sharing the love of God with others, through social justice efforts and intersecting with other people's needs, we will be helping them to experience God as they see lives transformed.
- We should be equipping youth and young adults for mission, giving some of them opportunities to grow as leaders, as well as a safe place to fail.

Parenting

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- Youth and young adults who are disengaging from the church have often not experienced help from their parents in developing their faith commitment.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

- Parents are often disengaged spiritually with their children because they are fearful of messing up or because they believe they need to give them the freedom to find their own way. Of course, some parents do not have an active faith life to share in the first place.

WHAT NEW PARADIGMS AND PRACTICES SHOULD WE DEVELOP IN RESPONSE?

- Parents need to be encouraged to model their own faith for their children and to articulate how God works in their lives and their children's lives, and thus engage in their children's spiritual journeys. Young adults would rather their parents be vulnerably honest about their spiritual walk (including the stumbles) than falsely pious or disengaged about the subject altogether.

Strategies for youth ministry

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- Many young adults who are engaged in the church have had positive experience with youth ministry of some kind or another, especially mission trips and camps.
- We lose young people when they "graduate" from the ministry group for one age to the next (and ministry transition point may also include times when youth and church leaders are in their own transition periods) – especially if they are tightly connected to a youth ministry that gives them little exposure to other members of the church community.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

- We need to develop ways of undertaking youth ministry that will help youth and young adults stay engaged with their church community.
- The uprooting of youth leaders (and other church leaders) for whatever reason may interfere with retention of youth.
- We should plan to facilitate intergenerational connections.

WHAT NEW PARADIGMS AND PRACTICES SHOULD WE DEVELOP IN RESPONSE?

- Strategic areas to explore, which relate to all of the other themes examined above, include:
  - Taking a holistic and intergenerational approach to shepherding children and youth through age transitions
  - Within an Evangelical context, developing partnerships between churches and independent agencies to plant churches that will welcome young adults
  - Nurturing families in their capacity as the primary agents in nurturing their children's spiritual formation, so that they can carry this out more effectively
  - Addressing the correlation between youth and young adult disengagement and the transience of youth and young adult ministry leaders
  - Considering transition points as entrances instead of exits
  - Considering whether to concentrate efforts on those who are "never-churched," who tend to be less suspicious and bitter toward the church than those who used to attend but have left; perhaps a strategy to reach the never-churched will also reach the Wanderers and the Rejecters.

15

WHERE NEXT?

The discernment process employed by the Think Tank participants is one in which all parents and leaders concerned about youth and young adult engagement in the church need to be involved, especially when it comes to their own ministries. To help with this, Chapter 15 suggests how local church and ministry groups can interact with the research and develop their own unique responses.

The findings of the Hemorrhaging Faith research project can be framed as portending disaster or as heralding an opportunity to discern a call from God to examine how we think about the church and its mission and how we execute those understandings in our church practices. To find opportunities to deepen discipleship and community relationships, thereby engaging youth and young adults more effectively, it will help to ask penetrating questions related to our own unique contexts.

A helpful starting point might be to assemble an intergenerational and otherwise representative group of church members, perhaps 15 to 20 persons in all, to discover its own findings related to Hemorrhaging Faith and to discern the next steps that God may be leading the church to take in relation to the findings and implications. This process would likely require more than a single day.

Discovery questions

1. How many of the young adults raised by parents who are members of the church are currently engaged in the church?
2. How many of the young adults who attended this church as children or teens are currently engaged in the church? How many are disengaged from it?
3. What reasons do they give for staying engaged with the church or rejecting the church?
4. When do those who are disengaged commonly leave the church?
5. Have those who are currently engaged been disengaged at some point in their lives? What reasons do they give for returning to the church?
6. Describe some of the highlights in the life of the church over the past three years. In which ways were youth and young adults involved?
7. What picture of the church emerges from the discovery process in terms of the following considerations?
    a. Depth of spiritual formation and discipleship among all members of the church
    b. Extent of community developed within and across particular age groups in the church
    c. Understanding of the church's mission and purpose
    d. Opportunities to develop the leadership potential of youth and young adults
    e. Involvement of parents in their children's spiritual formation
8. Which areas have generated high levels of hopefulness for ongoing engagement of youth and young adults in the church?
9. Which areas generate high levels of concern?
10. Given the answers to the questions so far, in which areas might the church need to change?
11. Do resources exist that would help in our particular situation (check resources developed by, for instance, the EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable and its members, James Penner & Associates and the research project partners)?

Discerning next steps

Having envisioned some ways in which the church *might* need to change, the group may find it helpful to focus on how the church *should* change, especially in relation to re-engaging Fence Sitters, Wanderers and Rejecters. The process would near completion when the group addresses how the church *will* change in terms of specific actions to be taken by a specified person or group within an expected time frame.

Maintaining hope

Talking about the ways in which young adults are disengaging from the church can raise anxiety levels to a high point. Frequent recourse to prayer and listening for God's words for the church in Scripture can help to develop the assurance that God is in the midst of the church, leading it to new life and health as it examines all aspects of its common life and mission through the lens of youth and young adult involvement. This is also an occasion to thank God for the young adult Engagers in the church, and for listening well to their insights throughout this process.

Appendix A

METHODOLOGY

There were three phases to this research project: literature review, semi-structured interviews, and a research panel survey.

Phase one's literature review included the work of

- Reginald Bibby, John Bowen, James Cote and Anton Allahar, David Sawler, Jack Suderman, Chris Tompkins, Don Posterski and John McAuley (Canadians)
- Zygmunt Bauman, Sara Savage, Sylvia Collins-Mayo, Bob Mayo with Graham Cray (Europeans)
- J. J. Arnett, Kenda Creasy Dean, Tim Clydesdale, James Davidson Hunter, Dan Kimball, Dan Kinnaman, Kara Powell and Chap Clark, Ed Stetzer, Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, Robert Wuthnow (Americans)
- Mike Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber (Australians).

In phase two, we completed 72 semi-structured 30- to 40-minute interviews with young adults from across the country (see Appendix B for the semi-structured interview instrument). These interviews investigated young adults' spiritual lives as children, teens and young adults. The interviews were conducted between January and December 2010.

Interviewees were chosen to be representative of the regional, linguistic, ethnic, immigrant and religious affiliation profile of Canadian Christian young adults. Fourteen of the 72 interviews were conducted with French speakers from Quebec to ensure a francophone Quebec voice. Interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo sociological software to help analyze the conversations.

Phase three involved applying the results of the literature review and semi-structured interviews to the design of a survey to measure the prevalence of the themes and experiences that had surfaced. A broad cross-section of Canadian ministry practitioners and young adults provided input to the survey.

The survey was then conducted on the Angus Reid Forum, an online research panel of close to 100,000 panelists, including both anglophone and francophone participants. Online research panelists sign up to complete a wide range of Internet-based market and opinion research surveys in exchange for modest incentives. When they initially join a panel, participants complete a profile that focuses on common demographic data. The data from each subsequent survey is used to augment these profiles. Surveys can subsequently be targeted to groups with particular characteristics.

Our research team was interested in two kinds of young adult respondents (currently aged 18–34):

1. Those who were raised Christian;
2. Those who were not raised Christian, but came to identify themselves as Christian by the time they were young adults.

The survey was conducted in two stages. First, the survey with several questions designed to identify who was raised Christian was distributed. These questions were embedded in a broader monthly omnibus survey conducted by Angus Reid Forum. Second, from this pre-screening survey we identified 2,886 respondents who matched our criteria. We then sent our survey questionnaire to these 2,886 panelists and received 2,049 responses.

Data evaluation

Every survey, no matter how carefully designed, has weaknesses and biases (systematic errors). Recognizing the presence of bias does not negate the results of a survey. It does, however, demand recognition of its presence and an evaluation of how that bias will affect the outcome.

OUTCOME BIAS

This project is a retrospective exercise in spiritual autobiography. From the vantage point of their young adulthood, we are examining how young adults understand their spiritual experience from childhood to the present.

A longitudinal study (surveying the same group at different points in their lives) would have provided a more accurate picture of the spiritual histories of young adults. We are engaging young adults with their spiritual histories as they understand them. Therefore, there is much for us to learn from this study.

We all attempt to develop coherent narratives about our lives. With our spiritual histories we will be biased to tell our stories in such a way that the path to the place we find ourselves now will look clear and, to a large extent, inevitable. For most of us, however, the path was not as straightforward as we perceive. Viewing it and defining it as such helps make sense of where we are, while strengthening our conviction that this is where we should be (or that we couldn't be in any other place). This effect is called outcome bias. Outcome bias tends to exaggerate confidence in our current position. For a survey such as this one, outcome bias cuts both ways. It suggests both an over-confidence in positive evaluations of Christian upbringings, and an over-confidence in the negative evaluation of Christian upbringings.

It is important for readers to understand outcome bias in relation to this data, because much of what is contained in this report can be read negatively. The reader may be tempted to conclude that the efforts of spiritual formation made by churches were, in the main, detrimental. This is not necessarily the case.

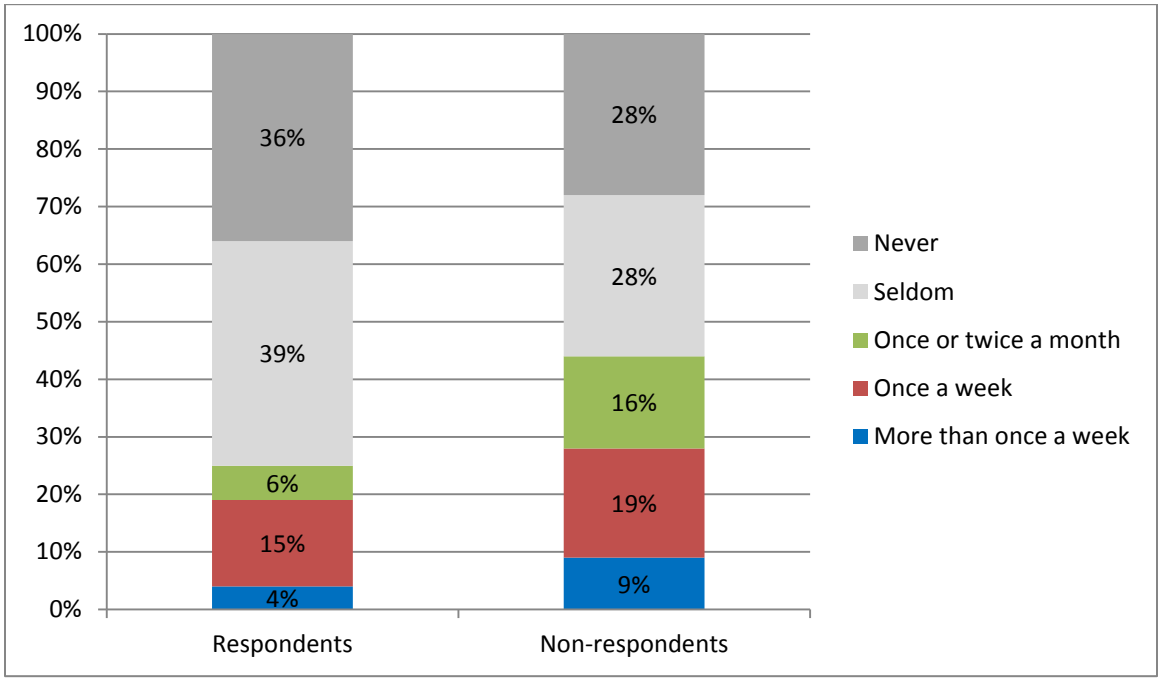
If a respondent ultimately arrives at a negative evaluation of her Christian experience, there still may have been a time when that Christian experience was quite positive. In many cases, young adults come to turning points in their lives that alter their perceptions of what came before. In this report we have tried to identify some of these common turning points and what these might mean for their journey of faith.

NON-RESPONSE BIAS

Non-response bias occurs when participants with the strongest opinions about the questions asked in the survey are the ones who actually respond. Those who don't feel as strongly tend not to respond. In cases where there is non-response bias there is a tendency to receive more extreme answers. If non-response bias was present in this survey, both overly positive and overly negative answers to the questions would be present, while more moderate answers would be under-represented. The presence of non-response bias can be tested by comparing the demographic characteristics of respondents and non-respondents. If there are significant differences, it suggests that certain demographics are engaged by the survey, while others are not.

Comparing the respondents and non-respondents we found no significant differences in the distribution of religious affiliation, household income, gender or voting patterns in the 2011 federal election.
We did find differences in employment status, education and attendance at religious services. Respondents are slightly more likely than non-respondents to be employed full-time (54% versus 47%), and slightly more likely to have at least some university education (57% versus 49%). Those who never or seldom attend religious services are over-represented in the sample (see chart A.1 below). We would expect that those who no longer regularly attend religious services would tend to have a less positive view of church and their Christian experience.

Chart A.1. Attendance at religious services for respondents and non-respondents



Overall, the differences between the respondents and non-respondents are slight. The most significant difference is in frequency of attendance at religious services as a young adult, with less frequent attenders over-represented.

Selection bias

Selection bias is concerned with errors in the way the sampling occurred. We assume, for example, that if a sample is done randomly it will represent the population as a whole. In our case we have purposely selected those who were raised Christian or subsequently became Christian. Therefore we understand from the outset that we do not have a true random sample. We do, however, seek to understand how closely our sample matches or deviates from the Canadian population. While it would be ideal to compare our raised Christian 18- to 34-year-old group to raised Christian Canadian 18- to 34-year-olds generally, that data is very difficult to obtain. We have instead made comparisons to the Canadian population in general and provided youth-specific analysis where data allows, especially in relation to gender, language, regional distribution and immigration factors.

Our respondents were 65% female and 35% male, which substantially under-represents males. We did not, however, find any significant differences in gender distribution between the respondents and non-respondents. This suggests that this imbalance is inherent to the research panel. It is an imbalance common in survey work with young males, including the Canadian census.

Our respondents were disproportionately urban, with 88% of respondents living in urban settings. On the 2006 census, just under 20% of the Canadian population reported living in rural settings. This may be, however, not as great a gap as first appears, because rural populations tend to be older than urban ones.

French speakers comprised 18% of our respondents, just under the 22% of Canadians who reported French as their mother tongue on the 2006 Canadian census.

The regional distribution of respondents closely matched the regional population distribution in the 2011 Canadian census.

Immigrants are under-represented, with just 9% of our respondents born outside of Canada, versus 20% of the Canadian population. This under-representation may be even greater, however, since the immigrant population is younger than the non-immigrant population.

Our sample, therefore, under-represents males, immigrants, and rural areas.

Other issues

Some of the language used in the survey was peculiar to an evangelical subculture, such as "committed Christians" and "growing deeper in my relationship with Jesus Christ." One respondent wrote, "The survey questions were oddly designed making it very difficult for a non-believer to answer them truthfully. It was a very awkward survey. The answers I wanted to give were simply not available as options."

Another added, "When offering Agree/Disagree answers, it would sometimes be helpful to also have the 'indifferent' option or even 'not Applicable.' This survey assumes that every person taking the survey is a Christian. No option to pick Atheist, Muslim, etc."

Some of the language and wording of questions frustrated some respondents. These respondents are indicating that, while they answered the questions, their answers do not adequately reflect the way they wished to answer the questions. It is unclear how this frustration affected how they responded to the survey.

Other respondents offered comments like, "Interesting – glad to be included in a survey that isn't about politics or purchasing and I wish that I could do this survey in my community."

While other Christian traditions were consulted in the design of the survey, the evangelical tradition of the investigators has clearly emerged in the survey design, and in a manner that we did not anticipate. Were this survey, or one like it, to be repeated additional attention would be given to the design of questions more broadly accessible to other Christian traditions.

Segmentation

This report principally segmented the Christian population into Roman Catholics, Mainline Protestants and Evangelicals. While there were 19 Orthodox Christian respondents in our survey, this subsample was too small for meaningful analysis.

Response rate

Pre-screen questions identified the 2,886 panelists that would subsequently receive our survey questionnaire. Of these 2,886 panelists, 2,049 responded to our June 2011 survey, giving us a response rate of 71%. The industry typically sees response rates closer to 40%. Clearly, we discovered a group that engaged with the questions and were very interested to provide feedback on their Christian experience within the church.

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Notes
- Guidance for the interviewer appears throughout the interview in italics.
- Brackets indicate terms where the interviewer will insert terms appropriate for the respondent.

Pre-Interview Qualifying Questions

Use the below qualifying questions to determine if interviewee meets the criteria of the respondent QUOTA numbers assigned to you. If they do, proceed with the interview.

- Are you between the ages of 18-34?
    - If yes, what is your age?
- What was your religious affiliation:
    - As a child?
    - As a teen?
    - *If Protestant, probe for denomination.*
- Did you attend a church or youth group regularly (monthly or more for a year) as a teen?
- Has your church attendance declined significantly since becoming a teen or young adult?
- Were you raised in a Christian family OR chose to be Christian during childhood or teen years?
    - *Even if interviewee says NO but attended a religious youth group monthly as a teen for a year they qualify for this research project.*
- Do you consider yourself a Christian now?
- What province are you presently from?
- What is the size and name of the community you come from?
- What is your ethnic background?
- Are you a:
    - Canadian immigrant?
    - 1st generation or 2nd generation Canadian?
- Are you:
    - Male?
    - Female?
-

Consent
- This interview will help the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada complete research on church and faith experiences of Canadian young adults.
- We are interested in individuals across Canada ages 18-34 who "were raised Christian" and/or attended church monthly or more for at least a year as a child or youth.
- We promise complete confidentiality to those we interview. Once transcribed, the interview will be assigned a number and you will receive a new name, both of which will be used for the duration of the study.
- Your input is of significant value to the research conclusions. Are you open to a forty to fifty minute interview to help us better understand young adults and their faith?
    - Yes
    - No (*End interview)*

Introduction
- Thank you for participating in our study! I appreciate you sharing your time.
- Please read, sign and date this consent form.

- You may stop the interview at any time if you are uncomfortable or need a break.

Faith and Church Participation in Childhood

Childhood refers to as early as the respondent can remember until approximately age 12. Teen refers approximately to ages 13 to 19.

Q1.

- Tell me about your church participation, first as a child and then as a teen.
    - How often did you go to church?
        - Was it:
            - Less than weekly?
            - Weekly?
            - More than once a week?
        - Were there ups and downs in your participation?
            - If yes, please explain further.
                - What contributed to the ups and downs?
                - Were there any patterns?

Q2.

- Tell me about the churches you attended growing up. Can you describe the ones that you attended for a year or more?
    - *Probe for*:
        - Size
        - Character of church
        - Relationship with other kids
        - Feelings about the ministers
        - How it felt to be in church and Sunday school
        - What you believed about its role in your life
        - Changes in the church
        - Any further subjective evaluation of the church

Q3.

- Did your parents dedicate you to God or have you baptized as an infant?
    - Does this mean anything to you?

Q4.

- What can you tell me about your faith in God or Christian belief as a young child? As a teen?
    - *Probing questions:*
        - Was your faith your own?
        - Was your faith your parents'?
        - Do you have any memories of experiencing God during this time?

Q5.

- Tell me about your own private religious practices as a child and then as a teen.
    - Did you do personal prayers, or do private Bible reading, or have devotional readings as a child?
    - What specifically did you do?
    - How old were you when you did this?
    - How was this for you? What did you think of it?

Q6.

- Can you recall any significant religious experiences growing up, like feeling the presence of God, answered prayers, miracles or healings, etc?
    - If yes, please tell me about them.

Q7.

- Some people use conversion to speak of an encounter with God….a kind of sudden spiritual awakening. Did you ever feel like you experienced something like this?
    - If yes, please describe it.

In Q8 thru Q12 probe for depth, salience, how much they enjoyed these practices and events, how much events were for parents or just "what you did."

Q8.

- Now let's talk about religious experiences and events that happened through the churches you attended. Did you grow up going to Sunday School, catechism classes and/or youth group?
    - What were those experiences like?
    - Do they have any significance for you now?

Q9.

- Did you experience a youth confirmation class or an adult baptism?
    - What was that like for you?

Q10.

- Did you attend religious camps, go on short term missions, or teach Sunday School or participate in any other church events like church day camps, boys and girls clubs, or church choirs or drama?
    - How did you feel about these activities?
        - Did you find [the events you participated in] beneficial at the time?
            - In what ways?
        - Were there things you didn't like about them?
            - In what ways?

Q11.

- Looking back on your church experience as a child and youth would you describe yourself as more of a SPECTATOR (where it was done for you) or a PARTICIPANT (where your gifts and talents were developed and appreciated)?

Q12.

- Let's talk about the religious climate in your house growing up.
    - How much was religion a topic of conversation?
    - Did you feel comfortable asking questions about religion or moral issues at home, including questioning what your church taught?
    - Did you pray together or do other religious practices as a whole family at home?

Q13.

Be intentional about probing for lack of commitment or drop offs of father and older siblings.

- Tell me about the religiosity of your family members, close friends and other adults.
    - Tell me about your mother's church involvement and private religious practices.
    - Tell me about your father's church involvement and private religious practices.
    - Do you have any siblings?
        - Tell me about your sibling(s)'s church involvement and private religious practices.
    - What about your close friends? What were their church involvements and private religious practices?
    - Were there any uncles and aunts or grandparents or other extended family members there that encouraged your spiritual development in your child and youth years?
    - Were there any other adults that encouraged your spiritual development growing up?

Q14.

- What type of schooling did you experience (home school, public, private, Catholic?) from kindergarten through Grade 12?
    - Do think your types of schooling impacted your faith or church attendance patterns then?
        - If so, how?

Q15.

- Were you known as a Christian at school:
    - In childhood?
    - In your teen years?

- How was this for you?

Q16.

- Was there anything about the church's teaching on sexuality in your childhood or youth years that affected you positively or negatively?
  - Elaborate.

Q17.

- Looking back on it NOW, are there any things about your church participation as a child or youth that really mean a lot to you? That you are glad are a part of your past?
  - If yes, tell me about it.

Q18.

- Looking back on it NOW are there any things about your church participation as a child or youth that you wish were not part of your past?
  - If yes, tell me about it.

Q19.

- Looking back at it NOW did any childhood or youth experiences solidify your faith?
  - If yes, please describe how this happened.

Q20.

- Did any childhood or youth experiences shake your faith, cause you to lose it, or almost lose it?
  - If yes, please describe how this happened.

<u>Present Faith Affiliation</u>

Q21.

- Which of these statement best represents your present religious affiliation and church activity NOW?
  - I consider myself a Christian.
    - *Go to QA22 to QA27.*
  - I do not consider myself a Christian.
    - *Go to QB22 to QB27.*

A. Respondent is Christian

QA22.

- Tell me about your experience of Christian faith NOW.
  - What does being Christian mean to you?
  - What does it bring to your life?
- *Probe for:*
  - Depth and salience of faith
  - If they own their faith
  - If their faith is their family or partner's

QA23.

- Have you ever had a time in your post high school years when your faith increased significantly?
  - If yes, explain the process.
    - What was happening in your life?
    - Why do you think your faith significantly increased during that time?
- *Probe for:*
  - Relationships
  - Work
  - Family
  - Other factors

QA24.

- Have you ever had a time in your post high school years when you considered giving up your Christian faith?
  - If yes, explain the process.
    - What was happening in your life?

- What resolutions, if any, did you come to?

QA25.

- Tell me about the religiosity of your closest friends.
  - How many would be Christian?
  - How important is having the same faith when choosing and keeping friends?

QA26.

- Think for a minute about Christian beliefs. Christians claim that: #1. "Forgiveness of sin comes through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?" and #2. That Christians should share this claim with others.
  - What do you think about these claims?
    - Do you agree with them?
  - Do you think Christians should witness to others about this claim?
    - Do you do this personally?

QA27.

- On another topic, do you think someone can be a Christian and NOT participate in a local church?

B. Respondent is No Longer (Or Never Was) Christian

QB22.

- Tell me the story about how you came to not consider yourself a Christian.
  - What was happening in your life?
  - How old were you?
  - Why do you think your faith dwindled at this time?
- *Probe for:*
  - Feelings about church
  - Relationship with other congregants
  - Feelings about ministers or priests
  - Beliefs about the church
  - Actions of the church
  - Traumatic events
  - Relationships
  - Work
  - Family
  - Life changes
  - Other factors

QB23.

- What do you get out of no longer (or not) being Christian?
  - Anything you particularly value?
  - Anything you don't like or are uncomfortable with?

QB24.

- Tell me about the religiosity of your closest friends.
  - How many would be Christian?
  - How important is having the same faith when choosing and keeping friends?

QB25.

- Think for a minute about Christian beliefs. Christians claim that: 1."Forgiveness of sin comes through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" and 2. That Christians should share this claim with others.
  - Has your understanding and commitment to these Christian beliefs changed since your childhood and youth years?
    - In what way?
    - Why do you think that might have been?
  - Do think Christians should share what they believe with others?

QB26.

- Can you see a time in the future when you might return to being Christian?
    - Why or why not?

QB27.

- On another topic, do you think someone can be a Christian and NOT participate in a local church?

<u>Present Church Activity</u>

Q28.

- Which of these statement best represents your church activity NOW?
    - I attend church monthly or more.
        - *Go to QA29 to QA32.*
    - I do not attend church monthly or more.
        - *Go to QB29 to QB32.*

A. Respondent Attends Church Monthly or More

QA29.

- Tell me about the church you attend and in what ways you participate.
    - *Probe for:*
    - Whether this is a spectator experience or a participant experience
    - Character of church
    - Relationship with other congregants
    - Feelings about ministers or priests
    - How it feels to be in church
    - What you believe about the church's role in your life
    - Size
    - Any further subjective evaluation of the church

QA30a.

- What do you get out of attending church?
    - Anything you particularly value?
    - Anything you don't like or are uncomfortable with?

QA30b.

Probe for salience and give opportunity to explain any interviewee identifies as significant.

- Which of the reasons that young adults stay in church do you identify with?
    - Church was a vital part of my relationship with God.
    - I wanted the church to help me guide my decisions in daily life.
    - I felt the church was helping me become a better person.
    - I wanted to follow a parent's or family members example.
    - I was committed to the purpose and work of the church.
    - Church initiatives were a big part of my life.
    - Church was helping me through a difficult part in my life.
    - I was afraid of living a life without spiritual guidance.

QA31.

- Think of your closest friends.
    - How many attend the same church?
    - How important is having the same church when choosing and keeping friends?

QA32.

- Now think for a minute about lifestyle issues.
    - Would you say your lifestyle matches what your church teaches?
        - Would they know if it did?
        - If it didn't, would this be a problem for you or your church?

B. Respondent No Longer Attends Church Monthly or More

QB29.

- Now think back to the time when your church attendance decreased significantly.
    - How old were you?
    - What was happening in your life at the time?
    - *Probe for:*
        - Degree of participation
        - Relationship with other congregants
        - Feelings about ministers or priests
        - Beliefs about the church
        - Actions of the church
        - Traumatic events
        - Relationships
        - Work
        - Family
        - Life changes
        - Other factors

QB30.

- Because you are no longer involved regularly at a church what are the implications for you?
    - Are there some things you miss?
    - Other things you are glad to get rid of?

QB31.

- When you think back to when you were involved in your church, what were the names of some of your closest friends at the church?
    - Do you have any contact with them now?
- When you left your church, did anyone contact you to ask why you left?

QB32.

Probe for salience and give opportunity to explain any interviewee identifies as significant.

- Did any of the following play a role in you dropping out of church
    - I simply wanted a break from church
    - Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical
    - I moved to college and stopped attending
    - Work responsibilities prevented me from attending
    - Moved too far from church to continue attending
    - Became too busy, though still wanted to attend
    - Didn't feel connected to the people in the church
    - I disagreed with the churches stance on political or social issues
    - Chose to spend more time with friends outside of church
    - Was only going to church to please others

<u>Conclusion: All Respondents</u>

Q33.

- What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    1. Less than high school
    2. High School
    3. Trade School/Business School/College
    4. University degree
    5. Graduate university degree
    0. Refuse *(Do not read)*

If Q33=3, 4 or 5 ASK Q33b and Q33c.

Q33b.

- Are you currently enrolled in a college or other institution of higher learning?
    - Yes, currently an undergraduate student
    - Yes, currently a graduate student
    - No
    - Not sure (*Do not read)*

Q33c.

- At the colleges and/or universities you attended were you ever involved in a Christian group on campus such as IVCF, Navigators or Catholic Christian Outreach?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Not sure *(Do not read)*
- If yes, describe the level of your involvement:
    - Very involved
    - Somewhat involved
    - Seldom involved
    - Other
        - Please explain further.

Q34.

- Have you ever attended a Bible College, seminary or Christian university or experienced a year of post high school faith formation such as YWAM or Capenwray?
    - Yes, I am currently enrolled in:
        - Name school and program
    - Yes, I previously attended:
        - Name school and program
    - No
    - Not sure *(Do not read)*

Q35.

- Which of the following best describes your marital status?
    - Single
    - Married
    - Common law
    - Not sure *(Do not read)*
    - Refuse *(Do not read)*

Q36.

- Have you ever been divorced?
    - Yes
    - No

Q37.

- Have you ever had a cohabiting relationship where you live with someone you are not married to?
    - Yes
    - No
- If Yes, are you currently in a cohabitating relationship?
    - Yes
    - No

Q38.

- How would you describe your personal sexual orientation?
    - Heterosexual
    - Homosexual
    - Bisexual
    - Don't know

- Other

Q39.

- How many times have you changed residence in the past five years?
  - Record answer

Q40.

- Which of the following best represents your religious affiliation NOW?
  - Roman Catholic Christian
  - Protestant Christian
  - Just Christian
  - Jewish
  - Muslim
  - Atheist
  - Agnostic
  - None
  - Other *(Ask them to specify)*
  - Refuse *(Do not read)*

If Q40=2 or 3 ASK Q40b.

Q40b.

- What is your specific Protestant denomination or Christian denomination?
  - *If they respond with a general denomination such as Baptist, probe for what type.*

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your insights with us.

Appendix C

ELECTRONIC SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Faith and Church Study of Canadian Young Adults "Raised Christian" Survey Instrument
Étude sur la foi et l'Église chez les jeunes adultes canadiens qui ont grandi dans un contexte chrétien : outils de sondage

Introduction
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We have some questions about your views on church and faith. Your perspective is important to us. The information we gather here will be widely shared with Canadians in the media, books and publications, but your participation is completely anonymous. Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. We want to hear your point of view.
Nous vous remercions du temps que vous consacrerez à répondre à ce sondage. Nous vous poserons des questions concernant vos perceptions sur l'Église et la foi. Votre opinion revêt une importance pour nous. Votre participation au sondage demeure confidentielle et anonyme. Les résultats seront diffusés dans les médias et utilisés pour la publication de livres et d'articles scientifiques. Veuillez, s'il vous plaît, garder à l'esprit qu'il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse. Ce qui nous importe, c'est de connaître votre opinion.

Part 1 – Family Background
To begin, we have a few questions about you and your family growing up. To the best of your knowledge, please select either yes, no or don't remember for each of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Don't remember

Pour débuter, nous avons quelques questions à vous poser sur vous et la famille dans laquelle vous avez grandi. Pour les questions suivantes, répondez, autant que vous le sachiez, par « oui », « non » ou « ne me rappelle pas ».

- Oui
- Non
- Ne me rappelle pas

1. I was born in Canada
   Je suis né au Canada
2. My mother was born in Canada
   Ma mère est née au Canada
3. My father was born in Canada
   Mon père est né au Canada
4. During my high school years I primarily lived with:

   - Biological Mother and Biological Father
   - Biological Mother only
   - Biological Father only
   - Biological Mother and her male partner
   - Biological Father and his female partner
   - Other

Durant l'école secondaire, je vivais principalement avec :
- Ma mère biologique et mon père biologique
- Seulement ma mère biologique
- Seulement mon père biologique
- Ma mère biologique et son partenaire masculin
- Mon père biologique et sa partenaire féminine
- D'autres personnes

5. My biological parents are divorced.

Mes parents biologiques sont divorcés.
- [If yes, biological parents divorced] How many years old were you when your parents divorced? [number of years, up to 2 spaces]

- [Le cas échéant, parents biologiques divorcés] Quel âge aviez-vous lors du divorce de vos parents?

Part 2 – Family Faith

Canadians grow up in all sorts of families. Some are religious and some are not. We'd like to better understand what your family was like when you were growing up. To the best of your knowledge, please selected either yes, no or don't remember for each of the following: [RANDOMIZE]
- Yes
- No
- Don't remember

Les Canadiens grandissent dans toutes sortes de famille. Certaines sont religieuses, d'autres ne le sont pas. Nous aimerions mieux connaître la famille dans laquelle vous avez grandi. Pour les questions suivantes, répondez, autant que vous le sachiez, par « oui », « non » ou « ne me rappelle pas ».
- Oui
- Non
- Ne me rappelle pas

6. My mother attended religious services regularly during my upbringing.
   Ma mère assistait régulièrement aux cultes à l'Église durant ma jeunesse.
7. My father attended religious services regularly during my upbringing.
   Mon père assistait régulièrement aux cultes à l'Église durant ma jeunesse.
8. I believe my mother prayed regularly outside of table grace.
   En plus de rendre grâce pour les repas, je crois que ma mère priait régulièrement.
9. I believe my father prayed regularly outside of table grace.
   En plus de rendre grâce pour les repas, je crois que mon père priait régulièrement.
10. My mother read the Bible regularly during my upbringing.
    Ma mère lisait la Bible régulièrement durant ma jeunesse.
11. My father read the Bible regularly during my upbringing.
    Mon père lisait régulièrement la Bible durant ma jeunesse.
12. My parent(s)' church attendance declined significantly or ceased altogether while I was living at home.
    Mes parents assistaient de moins en moins à l'Église ou ils ont cessé d'y aller au moment où j'habitais la maison familiale.
13. My parents encouraged me to explore religions other than Christianity.
    Mes parents m'ont encouragé à explorer d'autres religions que le christianisme.

Part 3 – Personal Belief

Here are some statements people have made about their beliefs. Please indicate if you agree or disagree, moderately or strongly. There are no right or wrong answers. It is what you think that matters. [RANDOMIZE]

- Agree strongly
- Agree moderately
- Disagree moderately
- Disagree strongly

Voici des énoncés que des gens ont faits sur leurs croyances. Veuillez, s'il vous plaît, indiquer si vous êtes, modérément ou fortement, en accord ou en désaccord. Il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse. Ce qui importe, c'est votre opinion.

- Fortement en accord
- Modérément en accord
- Modérément en désaccord
- Fortement en désaccord

14. My beliefs about God today are different from the one's I was raised with.
    Mes croyances à propos de Dieu sont différentes aujourd'hui de celles avec lesquelles j'ai grandi.
15. My central goal in life is to be happy.
    Mon but principal dans la vie, c'est d'être heureux.
16. What is right and wrong is a matter of personal opinion.
    Ce qui est bien ou mal est une question d'opinion personnelle.
17. I believe God answers my prayers.
    Je crois que Dieu répond à mes prières.
18. I have experienced God's love personally.
    J'ai expérimenté personnellement l'amour de Dieu.
19. My private beliefs about Christianity are more important than what is taught by any church.
    Mes croyances personnelles sur le christianisme sont plus importantes que ce qui est enseigné par n'importe quelle Église.
20. I would be willing to study the Bible with a friend.
    Je serai prêt d'étudier la Bible avec un ami ou une amie.
21. All world religions are equally valid.
    Toutes les religions du monde s'équivalent.
22. There exists a place of reward in the afterlife, sometimes called heaven.
    Il existe un lieu de récompense après la vie que l'on nomme parfois le paradis.
23. There exists a place of punishment in the afterlife, sometimes called hell.
    Il existe un lieu de châtiment après la vie que l'on nomme parfois l'enfer.

<u>Part 4 – Feelings Toward Church</u>

Here are some statements people have made about their feelings about church. Please indicate if you agree or disagree, moderately or strongly. There are no right or wrong answers. It is what you think that matters. [RANDOMIZE]

- Agree strongly
- Agree moderately
- Disagree moderately
- Disagree strongly

Voici quelques énoncés que des gens ont faits sur leurs sentiments à l'endroit de l'Église. Veuillez, s'il vous plaît, indiquer si vous êtes, modérément ou fortement, en accord ou en désaccord. Il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse. Ce qui importe, c'est votre opinion.

- Fortement en accord
- Modérément en accord
- Modérément en désaccord
- Fortement en désaccord

24. Doing private religious readings and praying at home is the same as attending church.
    Faire des lectures religieuses et prier chez soi est la même chose qu'aller à l'Église.
25. I think it is extremely important for churches to have programs geared toward teens.
    Je pense qu'il est extrêmement important pour l'Église d'offrir des programmes conçus pour les adolescents.
26. I think it is extremely important for churches to have programs geared toward young adults.
    Je pense qu'il est extrêmement important pour l'Église d'offrir des programmes conçus pour les jeunes adultes.
27. The church doesn't do enough to help those in need outside of the church.
    L'Église ne fait pas assez pour les gens dans le besoin à l'extérieur de l'Église.
28. Being mentored by an adult churchgoing Christian is important to me.
    C'est important pour moi d'avoir un mentor adulte et chrétien qui assiste régulièrement aux cultes à l'Église.
29. Life isn't worth living without Christian faith.
    La vie ne vaut pas la peine d'être vécue sans la foi chrétienne.
30. I think going to church is pointless.
    Je crois qu'aller à l'église est inutile.
31. I think the lifestyle demands that churches make are totally unrealistic choices for me.
    Je pense que le style de vie qu'exige l'Église est un choix totalement irréaliste pour moi.
32. The church is out of touch with what is important in our society
    L'Église est déconnectée de la réalité à propos de ce qui est important dans notre société.
33. In my experience, being involved with religious groups isn't worth the effort.
    D'après mon expérience, participer à un groupe religieux ne vaut pas la peine.
34. I think the church's teaching that sex should be saved for marriage is completely unrealistic.
    Je pense que les enseignements de l'Église selon lesquels les relations sexuelles demeure exclusive au mariage sont complètement irréalistes.
35. Churches should allow women to hold the same leadership positions as men.
    L'Église devrait permettre aux femmes d'avoir accès aux mêmes postes de direction que les hommes.
36. Churches should allow gay and lesbian people who remain celibate to participate fully in their ministries.
    Les Églises devraient permettre aux gais et aux lesbiennes qui pratiquent le célibat de participer pleinement à leurs ministères.
37. Churches should allow people who are practicing a gay or lesbian lifestyle to participate fully in their ministries.
    Les Églises devraient permettre aux personnes qui pratiquent un style de vie gai ou lesbien de participer pleinement à leurs ministères.
38. Churches should solemnize gay and lesbian marriages just as they solemnize heterosexual marriages.
    Les Églises devraient célébrer les mariages gais et lesbiens de la même manière que les mariages hétérosexuels.

[IF CURRENT ATTENDER ASK:]

39. Have you ever gone through a period in your life where you stopped attending church?
    - Yes
        a. What was happening in your life or at the church at the time you stopped attending?
    - No

- Avez-vous déjà cessé de fréquenter l'Église à un certain moment de votre vie ?
    - Oui
        - Que se passait-il dans votre vie ou à l'Église au moment où vous avez cessé de la fréquenter ?
    - Non

Part 5 - Feelings Toward Church and Christianity

Here are some statements people have made about their feelings about church and Christianity. Please indicate if you agree or disagree, moderately or strongly. There are no right or wrong answers. It is what you think that matters. [RANDOMIZE]

- Agree strongly
- Agree moderately
- Disagree moderately
- Disagree strongly

Voici quelques énoncés que des gens ont faits sur leurs sentiments à l'endroit de l'Église et du christianisme. Veuillez, s'il vous plaît, indiquer si vous êtes, modérément ou fortement, en accord ou en désaccord. Il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse. Ce qui importe, c'est votre opinion.

- Fortement en accord
- Modérément en accord
- Modérément en désaccord
- Fortement en désaccord

41. As a child, I felt forced to attend religious services.
    Durant mon enfance, je me sentais obligé d'assister aux cultes à l'Église.
42. These days, I am too busy to attend church regularly.
    En ce moment, je suis trop occupé pour fréquenter l'Église régulièrement.
43. In my experience, church members practice what they preach.
    D'après mon expérience, les membres de l'Église mettent en pratique ce qu'ils prêchent.
44. In my experience, church leaders practice what they preach.
    D'après mon expérience, les dirigeants de l'Église mettent en pratique ce qu'ils prêchent.
45. When I was growing up, most of my friends were committed Christians.
    Lorsque je grandissais, la plupart de mes amis étaient des chrétiens engagés.
46. I have experienced emotional healing through help received from a church.
    J'ai expérimenté la guérison émotionnelle par l'aide reçue de la part d'une Église.
47. My faith came alive for me through the witness of a friend.
    C'est par le témoignage d'un ami que ma foi est devenue vivante.
48. At some point in time my church attendance declined because of my lifestyle.
    À un certain moment dans ma vie, j'allais moins souvent à l'église à cause de mon style de vie.
49. At some point in time my church attendance declined significantly due to a geographical move.
    À un certain moment dans ma vie, j'allais beaucoup moins à l'église en raison d'un déménagement.
50. My faith became stronger through a period of personal hardship.
    Ma foi s'est fortifiée pendant une période de difficultés personnelles.

51. School exposed me to new ideas that challenged my faith.
    À l'école, j'ai été exposé à de nouvelles idées qui ont remis ma foi en question.
52. Attending church would be hypocritical for me.
    Ce serait hypocrite de ma part de fréquenter une Église.

Part 6 – Experiences in Church

Here are some things that may or may not have happened to you as a child or infant. For each one please indicate yes, no or don't remember: [DO NOT RANDOMIZE]

- Yes
- No
- Don't recall

Voici certains évènements qui vous sont peut-être arrivés dans votre jeune âge. Pour chacun d'eux répondez par « oui », « non » ou « ne me rappelle pas ».

- Oui
- Non
- Ne me rappelle pas

53. I was baptized as an infant.
    J'ai été baptisé enfant.
54. I was dedicated to God as an infant.
    Enfant, j'ai été dédicacé à Dieu.
55. I went to a Christian summer camp during my upbringing.
    Je suis allé à un camp d'été chrétien lorsque j'étais jeune.
    - [If yes went to Christian summer camp]
        a. Did your faith come alive at summer camp?
            - Yes
            - No
            - Don't recall
    - [Le cas échéant, à un camp d'été chrétien]
        b. Votre foi est-elle devenue plus vivante à un camp d'été ?
            - Oui
            - Non
            - Ne me rappelle pas
56. I was confirmed as a child, teen or young adult.
    J'ai été confirmé enfant, adolescent ou comme jeune adulte.
    - [If yes, confirmed]
        a. Did you feel pressure to be confirmed?
        b. Does your confirmation hold significant meaning for you now?
            - Yes
            - No
            - Don't recall
    - [Le cas échéant, confirmé]
        a. Avez-vous ressenti de la pression pour faire votre confirmation ?
        b. Votre confirmation revêt-elle une importance pour vous aujourd'hui ?
            - Oui
            - Non
            - Ne me rappelle pas
57. I was baptized as a child, teen or young adult.
    J'ai été baptisé enfant, adolescent ou jeune adulte.

- [If yes baptized]
    a. Did you feel pressure to be baptized?
    b. Does your baptism hold significant meaning for you now?
        - Yes
        - No
        - Don't recall
- [Le cas échéant, baptisé]
    a. Avez-vous ressenti de la pression pour vous faire baptiser ?
    b. Votre baptême revêt-il une importance pour vous aujourd'hui ?
        - Oui
        - Non
        - Ne me rappelle pas

58. I attended church youth group as a teen.
    Adolescent, participais à un groupe de jeunes à l'Église.
- [If yes church teen group]
    a. Did you feel accepted by your peers in the church group?
    b. Did your youth leaders do a great job of modeling Christianity for you?
        - Yes
        - No
        - Don't recall
- [Le cas échéant, groupe de jeunes à l'Église]
    a. Vous sentiez-vous accepté par vos pairs dans le groupe d'adolescents à l'Église ?
    b. Vos responsables jeunesse ont-ils fait un excellent travail pour vous modeler le christianisme ?
        - Oui
        - Non
        - Ne me rappelle pas

59. I went on a mission trip during my upbringing.
    J'ai fait un voyage missionnaire lorsque j'étais jeune.
- If yes [did a mission]
    a. Did your faith come alive on a mission trip?
        - Yes
        - No
        - Don't recall
- Le cas échéant [fait un voyage]
    a. Votre foi est-elle devenue plus vivante lors d'un voyage missionnaire ?
        - Oui
        - Non
        - Ne me rappelle pas

60. I attend(ed) a church young adults' group.
    Je participe (ais) à un groupe de jeunes adultes à l'Église.
- [If yes church young adults' group]
    a. Did you feel accepted by your peers in the young adults' group?
        - Yes
        - No
        - Don't recall
- [Le cas échéant, groupe de jeunes adultes]

a. Vous sentiez-vous accepté par vos pairs dans le groupe de jeunes adultes à l'Église ?
    - Oui
    - Non
    - Ne me rappelle pas

61. I was involved in a Christian club on my college/university campus.
    Je participais à groupe chrétien au cégep, au collège ou à l'université.

Part 7 – Feelings Toward Church

Here are some statements people have made about their feelings about church. Please indicate if you agree or disagree, moderately or strongly. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. It is what you think that matters. [RANDOMIZE]

- Agree strongly
- Agree moderately
- Disagree moderately
- Disagree strongly

Voici quelques énoncés que des gens ont faits sur leurs sentiments à l'endroit de l'Église. Veuillez, s'il vous plaît, indiquer si vous êtes, modérément ou fortement, en accord ou en désaccord. Nous vous le répétons, il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse. Ce qui importe, c'est votre opinion.

- Fortement en accord
- Modérément en accord
- Modérément en désaccord
- Fortement en désaccord

62. In my experience, church members are often rude to one another.
    D'après mon expérience, les membres de l'Église manquent souvent de respect les uns envers les autres.
63. I feel free to ask questions of church leaders.
    Je me sens libre de poser des questions aux dirigeants de l'Église.
64. In my experience, church sermons don't help me live a meaningful life.
    D'après mon expérience, les sermons à l'Église ne m'aident pas à vivre une vie enrichissante.
65. I have personally been hurt by church leaders.
    J'ai personnellement été blessé par des dirigeants de l'Église.
66. My parents have been hurt by church leaders.
    Mes parents ont été blessés par des dirigeants de l'Église.
67. In my experience, the opinions of youth matter to church leaders.
    D'après mon expérience, les opinions des jeunes revêtent de l'importance pour les dirigeants d'Église.
68. I have experienced a church split.
    J'ai vécu une division dans l'Église.
69. In my experience, church leaders are welcoming of all ethnic groups.
    D'après mon expérience, les dirigeants de l'Église accueillent tous les groupes ethniques.
70. Those in church leadership are able to help me explore my toughest questions.
    Les chrétiens responsables dans l'Église sont en mesure de m'aider à explorer les questions que je trouve ardues.
71. In my view, it's important for churches to makes use of new technologies, like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.
    Selon moi, c'est important que les Églises utilisent les nouveaux réseaux sociaux comme Facebook, Twitter et YouTube.
72. In my experience, church leaders do not care about me.

D'après mon expérience, les dirigeants de l'Église ne se soucient pas de moi.

73. In my experience, the church addresses tough topics in their sermons.
    D'après mon expérience, l'Église aborde des sujets difficiles dans les sermons.
74. In my experience, church is a place where people are equipped to help others.
    D'après mon expérience, l'Église a réussi à outiller les croyants au point où ils peuvent en aider d'autres.
75. In my experience, church is a place where people grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus.
    D'après mon expérience, l'Église réussit à amener les croyants à approfondir leur relation avec Jésus.
76. Women didn't have the rights they should have, in the church I grew up in.
    Dans l'Église où j'ai grandi, les femmes n'avaient pas les droits qu'elles auraient dû avoir.
77. I have felt judged by church members for my lifestyle decisions.
    Je me suis senti jugé par des membres de l'Église pour des décisions sur mon style de vie.
78. The church members I know are accepting of those outside the church.
    Les membres de l'Église que je connais acceptent les personnes qui sont à l'extérieur de l'Église.
79. In my experience, church leaders value church programs more than people.
    D'après mon expérience, les dirigeants de l'Église valorisent plus les programmes que les gens.
80. The church makes a difference in my community.
    L'Église améliore la situation dans ma communauté.
81. In my experience, church is a place where my talents go unappreciated.
    D'après mon expérience, l'Église est un endroit où mes talents ne sont pas appréciés.
82. I have been given the opportunity to lead in church.
    On m'a donné l'occasion de diriger à l'Église.

Part 8 - Personal Faith Practices

83. About how often do you pray privately?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- About weekly
- 2-3 times a month
- About once a month
- Hardly ever
- Never

À quelle fréquence priez-vous en privé ?

- Quotidiennement
- Plusieurs fois par semaine
- À peu près chaque semaine
- Deux à trois fois par mois
- Environ une fois par mois
- Presque jamais
- Jamais

84. About how often do you read the Bible?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- About weekly
- 2-3 times a month

- About once a month
- Hardly ever
- Never

À quelle fréquence lisez-vous la Bible?

- Quotidiennement
- Plusieurs fois par semaine
- À peu près chaque semaine
- Deux à trois fois par mois
- Environ une fois par mois
- Presque jamais
- Jamais

Thank you very much for your willingness to share in this survey.
Nous vous remercions beaucoup pour votre temps et votre ouverture à participer à ce sondage.