



Challenges and Prospects of Counseling the Youths

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Introduction

Today's youth determines the destiny of the world tomorrow. They are products of the past, stewards of the present and treasurers of the futures. They need to know this responsibility to shape their future. Such concern becomes important for the adults to raise because there is a change of attitude among certain section of youths. They are fed up with merely reading history of the great decades of our great land. They want to make history and mould history. They do have dreams of making world a suitable place for global brotherhood.¹ Youth is productive and therefore church must do ministry and understand the importance of ministry among the youth. Today, particularly, in rural areas youth are no more coming to the church and have less participation in church activities. In this paper, the meaning of youths, trends of youths, issues of youths and few other challenges and prospects of counseling to youth by using the principles of pastoral counseling are discussed.

1.What is Youths?

Youth is the time of life when one is young, but often means the time between childhood and adulthood.² Youth is a wonderful time in which physical energy, mathematical, inventive and creative skills come to their peak in late adolescence. These energies harnessed to burgeoning

¹ B.J. Prashantham, *Indian Case Studies in Therapeutic Counseling* (Sainathapuram Vellore: Christian Counseling Centre Vellore, 2005), 56.

² www.wow.com/wiki/Youth accessed on 14/10/2017 (3:00 am)

sexual energy can all contribute to the welfare and continuation of the human race.³ Theodore Lidz as cited by Prashantham “Youth is a time of seeking: a seeking inward to find who one is; a searching outward to locate one’s place in life; a longing for another with whom to satisfy cravings for intimacy and fulfilment. It is a time of turbulent awakening to love and beauty but also today’s darkened by loneliness and despair.”⁴ Thus, youth is a most beautiful time and stage of the human being. Let us see few trends and issues faced by the youths which are very common in India.

2. Trends Issues

2.1. Radical Groups: Youth are frustrated with the current approaches and are indignant about the social injustices where the rich are becoming richer and the poor still poorer. In my own context with the poor governance, and least attention towards unemployment and injustice done towards youths, the numbers of youths are quest for the meaning of their lives. This situation leads to formation of insurgency groups to which youths are attracted. On the other hand, students calling for bandh, agitations, strikes, etc. is frequent in order to show their displeasure toward the government. While we may not agree with all that they do but we cannot deny the fact underlying quest for meaning in them and in other similar groups.

2.2. The Drug Culture: Drug problems are not only in the Western countries but also in our country drug addiction is on the rise especially high schools and college students are experimenting with drugs and getting addicted. Youths are experimenting drugs because of frustration, dejection and seeking comfort and meaning. According to Yusuf, drugs and

³ Wesley Carr, et al., *The New Dictionary of Pastoral Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: SPCK, 2002),401.

⁴ B.J. Prashantham, *Indian Case Studies in Therapeutic Counseling* (Sanaithapuram Vellore: Christian Counseling Centre, 2005),44.

alcohol is commonly due to a combination of curiosity and peer pressure.⁵ It is very much true to my own context that one of the factors youths are involved in drugs culture is because of peer pressure as well as availability of drugs. They do not think much about future and aware of their family culture but they just jump into drugs and get into it.

2.3. A Growing Number of Teenage Suicides: In India the peak of suicide is found between the ages of 13 and 25. There are many reasons for suicide but it is agreed that meaninglessness or purposelessness is an important factor in contemplating suicide. It is the sign of human weakness and failure. The more frequent reasons for suicide are person's inability to cope with problems, social isolation and feeling of being useless and merely a burden to others. Thus despair is the most common motive for suicide.⁶

3. Growth issues of Youth

In order to understand youth we shall see the growth issues of youth so that one can help and resolve various crisis of youth. They are discussed below:

3.1. Adult – Adult: In late teenage and twenties young people are aware of their own emerging adulthood and responsibilities. They felt that they are no more children. But how to relate them as adult is an issue for them. At this stage, they wished to be treated them as adult but not as kids. So to resolve this crisis we need to understand three different ways of growing up in their lives.

- a) At this stage of life some youths are very much dependent on adults like parents and teachers who sometime considered them as very obedience youths. They lose

⁵ Yusuf A. Merchant, *Brown Sugar Addiction* Bombay: The Drug Abuse Information Rehabilitation and Research Centre, 1987), 38.

⁶ Intijungla Longchar, *Dynamic Youth in a broken world* (Dimapur: Voice of God Ministries, 2010), 119.

all their initiative and not in the position to take serious decisions without some adult but depending on others. This type of resolving is called dependence.

- b) Some other youths are bossy attitude towards adults and they are always wanted to do opposite of adults. They rebel against authority and authoritative system in our various contexts in the society. We may see this from young men and young women running away from home.⁷ This type of resolving crisis is called independence.
- c) Other youths who learn to assert and affirm their adulthood and there are other learn to depend on their parents and adult for certain things. This resolving of crisis is called inter-dependence.⁸

3.2. Sexuality: Youth are very acutely aware of their inner sexual impulses and the attractions toward the opposite sex in the outside world. There is a great curiosity to know about sex and its function of life. Some may experiment on sex and others may be victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. There are so many underground materials which impart bizarre and erroneous ideas about human sexuality. This sexual crisis resolved through marriage or celibacy.⁹ In course of human development many persons are likely to experiment out of curiosity. The guilt and shame related to this, if not resolved properly, can prevent spontaneous development of the personality and even lead them into personality disintegration and occasionally into mental illness.¹⁰

⁷ Intijungla Longchar, *Youth Dilemma: Response to the questions of Today's Youth* (Dimapur: Voice of God's Ministries, 1999),29-32.

⁸ B.J. Prashantham, *Indian Case Studies in Therapeutic Counseling* (Sanaithapuram Vellore: Christian Counseling Centre, 2005),44.

⁹ Joan Chunkapura, *Transition and Counselling* (Kottayam: TRADA,2001),38.

¹⁰ Joan Chunkapura, *Transition and Counselling*,39.

3.3. Vocation: Carlos Welch resolves three different ways regarding choice career among youth. They are:¹¹

- a) Some youth resolve this crisis through process of designation in which they are forced to select the career which is destined to their cast, or continue the career of their parents or grandparents. This is called vocation through designation.
- b) Some youth grab job available to them even if it is not suitable to their training or background. As I mentioned above, due to paucity of job opportunities many youth just do whatever they can get. This may be called vocation through resignation.
- c) Few fortunate youth discover a career suitable to their taste and training. This is called vocation through inspiration. Only such people find job satisfaction and happiness in their career. If this is not done properly the fear of unemployment may lead the youth to serious crisis.

3.4. Social Status: There are two way of accepting one's social status. Those who have integrated their self in a positive way become goal oriented. They move with persons of the same status. They mixed with the culture and customs of their successful peers. They relate to others meaningfully. On the other hand, those who have poor self image try to find their identity in a negative way. They join the clicks and gangs of the ghetto culture.¹²

3.5. Meaning of Life: Meaning of life is the area of search and growth among the youth. Each one has to find meaning of life. Different youth try to find it through a philosophy of life, religious identity as Hindus, Muslims, and Christians etc. It is a well-established fact that meaninglessness pervades in a significant way among youth today. Perhaps it is related to the job situation.

¹¹ Joan Chunkapura, *Transition and Counselling*,39.

¹² B.J. Prashantham, *Indian Case Studies in Therapeutic Counseling* ,45.

4. Challenges and Prospects

Since youth are an important group of people in the society they are the pride of every parent, the hope of the society and the backbone of the nation. They are the precious gift of God to family and society. Therefore, it is the role of the church to respond to the need of the youth, guiding and nurturing them towards a healthy growth in their moral, ethical, spiritual, social, and life. So the following types of counselling may useful for helping the youth.

4.1. Supportive Counselling: Supportive Counselling is a method of supporting a person by providing confidence, encouragement and guidance to reduce tension and build strength. The purpose is to help persons gain strength and perspective to use their psychological and interpersonal resources more effectively and cope the real life situation meaningfully. Counsellor in supportive can motivate, inspire and help the youth to build up their confidence, fight adverse circumstances. Pastor in such cases can reassure the redeeming grace and forgiveness of Christ who even restored the woman caught in adultery. Pastor can help the youth overcome the dilemmas in life and help them to live and honourable and trustworthy life.¹³

4.2. Group Counselling: It is widely used in healing today because it stimulates growth and wholeness of each member. Thus Joan cited the word of Lincoln that “The Lord prefers common looking people. That is why he made so many of them.” Group Counselling can be a wonderful instrument to redeem and help youth to cope with life situation.¹⁴ A sense of belongingness, secure support, improves communication, care and guidance of the group and meaningful interaction derives from group counselling. Youth is period of search for self-

¹³ Phandenmo Kath, *Human Sexuality: Biblical Teachings vis-a vis Contemporary Views* (Mokokchung: Tribal Development and Communication Centre, 2009), 109.

¹⁴ Joan Chunkapura, *Psychotherapies and Counseling* (Kottayam: TRADA, 2006), 224.

identity and self-worth, therefore group counselling provides a conducive environment to discover self-potential and increase self-confidence by facilitating greater awareness, relating oneself to other's similar needs and problems.

The group counselling can focus a wholistic personality development of the youth by grouping the youths as 'peer culture', music lovers, sports lovers, etc. In such group, a 'meaningful space' can be created where both the sexes can grow together as sexual beings. Youth maintaining the sanctity of such close togetherness. Thus, guiding them toward meaningful and purposeful living through group counselling is a must in Church ministry.¹⁵

4.3. Logo Therapeutic Counselling: Logo therapy is a theoretical approach to psychotherapy developed by Victor Frankl. Its goal is to provide healing through meaning. Frankl considers human search for meaning in life a primary force. Logo therapy aims at healing a person by helping him/her to find meaning, the purpose in life. This meaning is unique and specific that as it can be fulfilled only by oneself.¹⁶ Logo therapy believes that life never ceases to have a meaning. The meaning in life may be found on three ways. 1) By experiencing a value 2) By doing something 3) by experiencing the meaning of suffering.¹⁷ Most young people go through frustration, hopelessness, low self-esteem etc. Due to various reasons like failures in academic, unemployment, break-up in love affairs, transition from one stage of life to another, retirement, etc.¹⁸ In such cases, Logo therapeutic counselling is very relevant for the recovery of the youth.

¹⁵ Phanemo Kath, *Human Sexuality: Biblical Teachings*, 109.

¹⁶ Gerald Gorey, *Manual for Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (California: Cole Publishing Company, 1991), 76.

¹⁷ Joan Chunkapura, *Hand Book of Counselling and Psychotherapies* edited by Antony Mannarkulam (Kottayam: Sanjivani Publication, 1997), 189-191.

¹⁸ Gerald Corey, *Manual for Theory and practice of Counselling*, 77.

In conclusion, since youth are productive and backbone of the nation, church must respond to the problems of youth if we are to build better society and nation. Church needs to give more space for youth ministry. Today many pastors are found to be moralistic, authoritarian and judgemental etc.¹⁹ Therefore, such attitude may simply create gap between youth and church.

In this article, what I have tried to underline is the factors of the problem faced by the youths of the modern time. Those issues are identified from the local context of Manipur to which I am familiar with. I have then tried to locate counselling approaches to adopt in shaping the youth of the future. It is not possible for us to think of creating a situation where there is no problem for the youth because it will always be there. But on the part of the Christian ministers and any adult citizens we must look for the best approach to deal with the situation so that youth do not become victims of the crises.

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¹⁹ Ezamo Murry, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care and Counselling* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 222.