



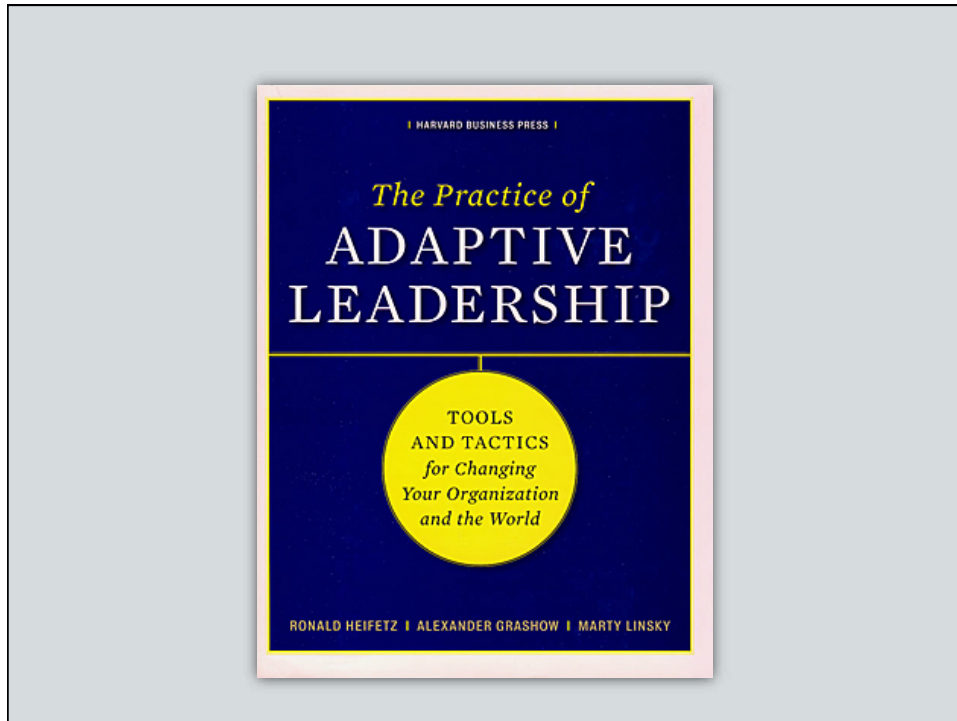
PART 1.  
REIMAGING FAITH FORMATION IN  
THE FIRST THIRD OF LIFE

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## Challenges We Face

What are the challenges we face in First Third Ministry?

- ▣ As Ministry Leaders
- ▣ As Congregations
- ▣ As Denominations



## Technical vs. Adaptive

- **Technical problems** (even though they may be complex) can be solved with knowledge and procedures already in hand.
- Easy to identify.
- Require change in just one or a few places; often contained within organizational boundaries
- Everyday, people have problems for which they do, in fact, have the necessary know-how and procedures—*technical problems*.

## Technical vs. Adaptive

- **Adaptive challenges** are situations for which solutions lie outside the current way of operation.
- Difficult to identify (easy to deny). People often resist even acknowledging adaptive challenges
- Require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization.
- Without learning new ways—changing attitudes, values, and deep-seated behaviors—people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment.
- Calls for changes of heart and mind—the transformation of long-standing habits and deeply held assumptions and values.

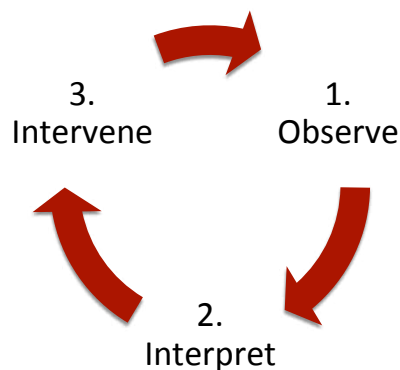
## You May Be Facing an Adaptive Challenge If. . .

- the solution requires operating in a different way than you do now. . .
- the problem AND the solution require learning. . .
- the solution requires shifting the authority and responsibility to the people who are actually affected. . .
- the solution requires some sacrifice of your past ways of working or living. . .
- the solution requires experimenting before you're sure of the answer. . .
- the solution will take a long time. . .
- the challenge connects to people's deeply held values. . .

## Adaptive Responses

- Adaptive leadership is a process of conservation and loss.
- “Of all that we care about, what must be given up to survive and thrive going forward?”
- “Of all that we care about, what elements are essential and must be preserved into the future, or we will lose precious values, core competencies, and lose who we are?”
- As in nature, a successful adaptation enables an organization or community to take the best from its traditions, identify, and history into the future.

## The Adaptive Intervention Process



1. **Observing** events and patterns around you;
2. **Interpreting** what you are observing (developing multiple hypotheses about what is really going on; and
3. **Designing** interventions based on the observations & interpretations to address the adaptive challenge you have identified.

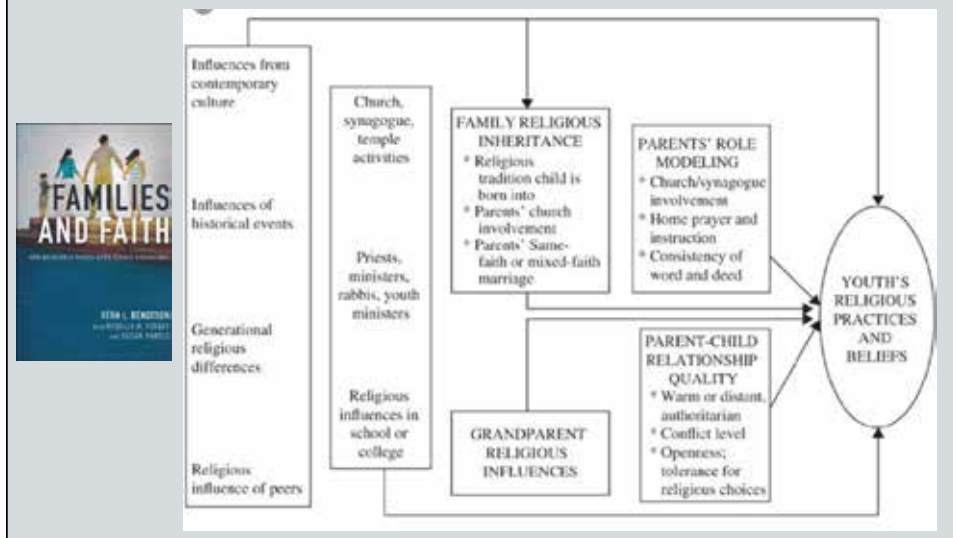
## Big Adaptive Challenges

### Deeply Systemic Challenges

- **Formational:** Intergenerational Religious Transmission
- **Missional:** Diversity of Religious Practice & Engagement

## Faith Forming Processes

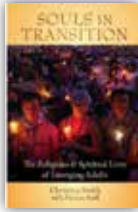
## Intergenerational Religious Transmission



## Religious Transmission



## Factors Promoting Faith Growth



The combination of the following factors makes an enormous difference in religious outcomes during emerging adulthood:

1. the teenager's parental religion
2. importance of faith
3. prayer
4. Scripture reading
5. lack of religious doubts
6. personal religious experiences
7. having supportive nonparent adults in the church

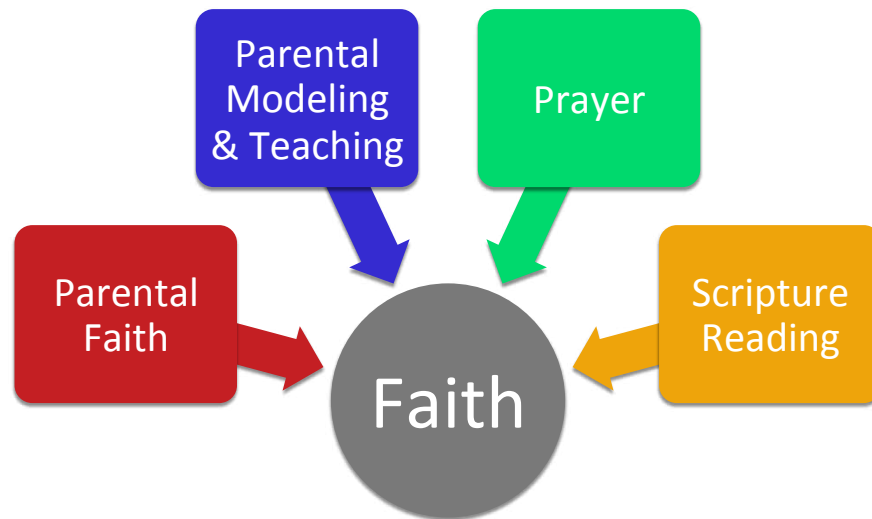
These most influential factors make differences of sizeable magnitude in substantive outcomes.

## Factors Promoting Faith Growth

In these seven factors alone, we have identified some powerful teenage factors associated with and, we think, causing differences in emerging adult religious commitment and practice.

- 85% chance of being Highly Religious as an emerging adult if you were in the top 25% on the scales of:
  1. parental religion
  2. prayer
  3. importance of faith
  4. Scripture reading

## Family Religious Socialization

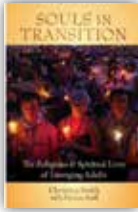


## Factors Promoting Faith Growth

- 75% chance of being a Highly Religious emerging adult if you were in the the top 25% on scales of:
  5. having support nonparent adults in the church,
  6. having personal religious experiences
  7. lack of religious doubts



## Factors Promoting Faith Growth



- Approximately 70% of youth who at some time or other before mid-emerging adulthood commit to live their lives for God, the vast majority appear to do so early in life, apparently before the age of 14.
- Most make their first commitments to God as children or during the preteen or very early teen years.
- Many religious trajectories followed in the course of life's development seemed to be formed early in life.

## Critical Role of Family

*“... teenagers with seriously religious parents are more likely than those without such parents to have been trained in their lives to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that that training “sticks” with them even when they leave home and enter emerging adulthood”*

## Critical Role of Family

*“Emerging adults who grew up with seriously religious parents are through socialization more likely (1) to have internalized their parents religious worldview, (2) to possess the practical religious know-how needed to live more highly religious lives, and (3) to embody the identity orientations and behavioral tendencies toward continuing to practice what they have been taught religiously.”*

## Critical Role of Family

*“At the heart of this social causal mechanism stands the elementary process of teaching—both formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal, oral and behavioral, intentional and unconscious, through both instruction and role modeling. We believe that one of the main ways by which empirically observed strong parental religion produced strong emerging adult religion in offspring is through the teaching involved in socialization.”*

*(Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults by Christian Smith with Patricia Snell)*

## Critical Role of Family

*What people have been in the past is generally the best indicator of why they are what they are in the present and what they will likely be in the future.*

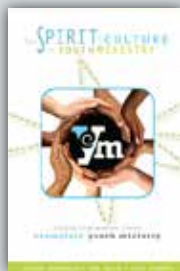
*That is a fact that needs to condition the understanding of emerging adult religion.*

## Factors Promoting Faith Growth

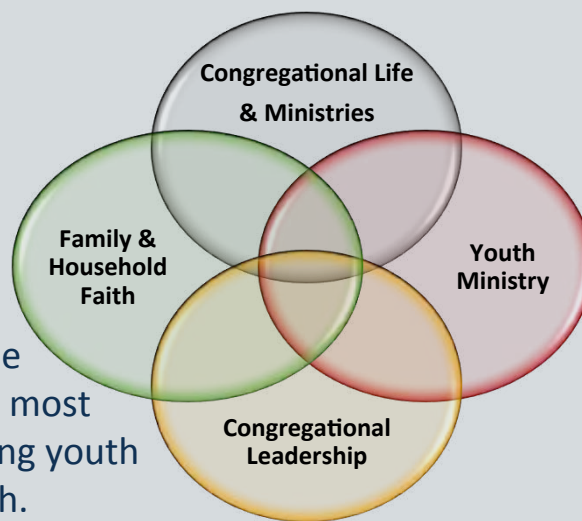
- **Parental Influence:** The single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of children and adolescents (and emerging adults) is their parents.
- **Embedded Family Religious Practices:** Effective religious socialization comes about through specific religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family life.

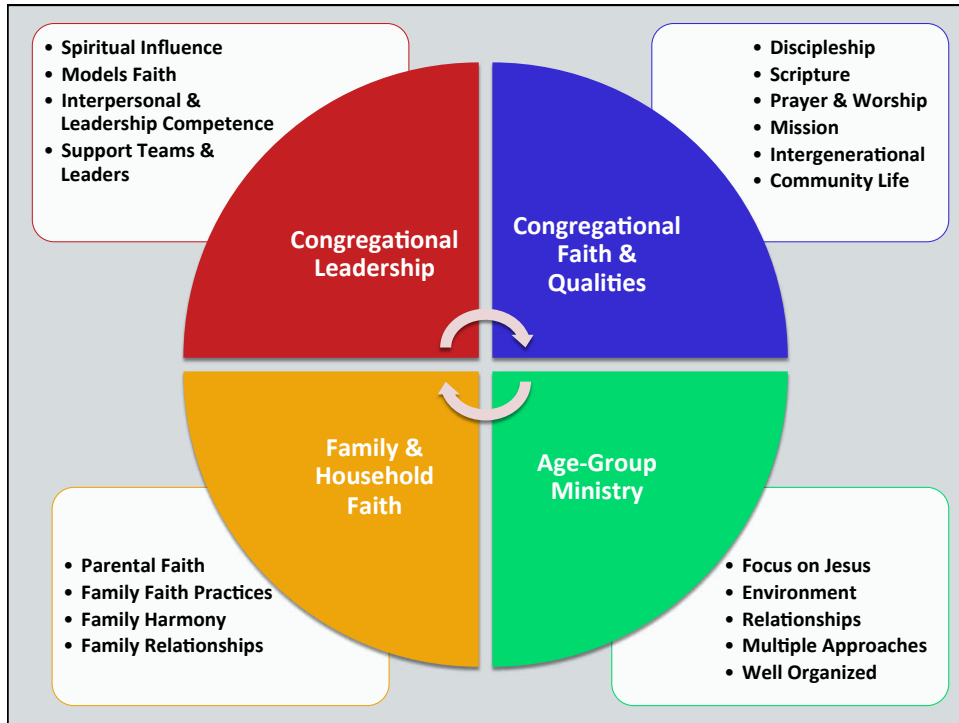
1. Nurturing the faith life of parents and grandparents
2. Teaching and resourcing parents and grandparents to provide religious socialization and model the Christian faith and practice
3. Engaging the whole family in worship and community life
4. Equipping families to engage in faith practices
5. Building family assets
6. Encouraging parents to develop a warm, supporting, affirming, and authoritative parenting style

## Congregational Culture

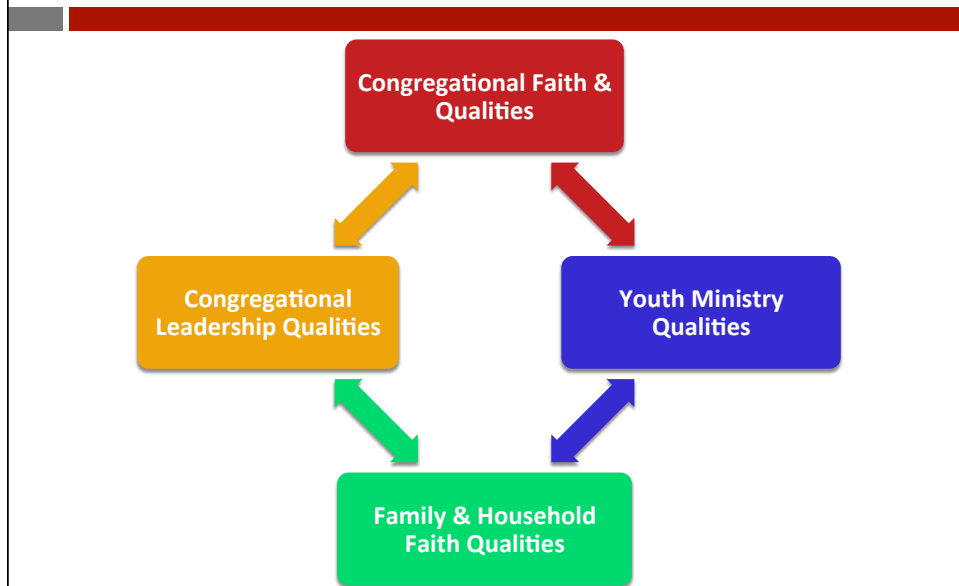


It is the culture of the whole church that is most influential in nurturing youth of vital Christian faith.





## Congregational Culture:44 Assets



## Congregational Faith

1. Congregation's Biblical Emphasis
2. Congregation Teaches Core Christian Concepts
3. Congregation's Moral Guidance
4. Worship Services' Positive Characteristics
5. Congregation Promotes Service
6. Congregation's Mission Effectiveness

## Congregational Qualities

1. Warm, Challenge Congregational Climate
2. Welcoming Atmosphere
3. Satisfied with the Congregation
4. Importance of this Church to Me
5. Congregation's Moral Guidance
6. Congregation's Social Interaction
7. Congregation's Openness to Change
8. Members Experience Love and Support

## Faith Forming Processes



## Faith Forming Processes

1. Caring relationships
2. Celebrating rituals and milestones
3. Celebrating the liturgical seasons
4. Learning the Christian tradition and applying it to life today
5. Praying, devotions, and spiritual formation
6. Reading the Bible
7. Serving people in need, working for justice, caring for creation
8. Worshipping with the faith community

## Family Faith

### **Embedded Family Religious Practices**

- Eating Together – especially the power of Sunday meals and holidays
- Praying – bedtime rituals and prayer, grace before meals
- Having family conversations
- Displaying sacred objects and religious images, especially the Bible
- Celebrating holidays
- Providing moral instruction
- Engaging in family devotions and reading the Bible

## Changing Religiosity & Practices

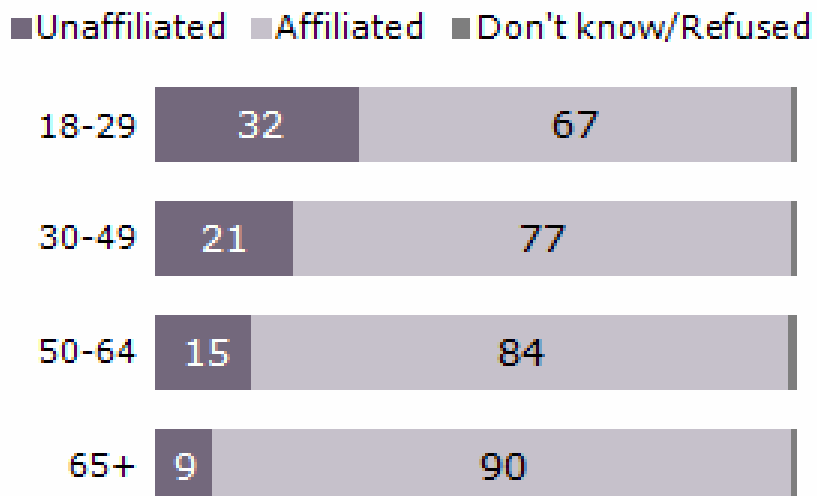


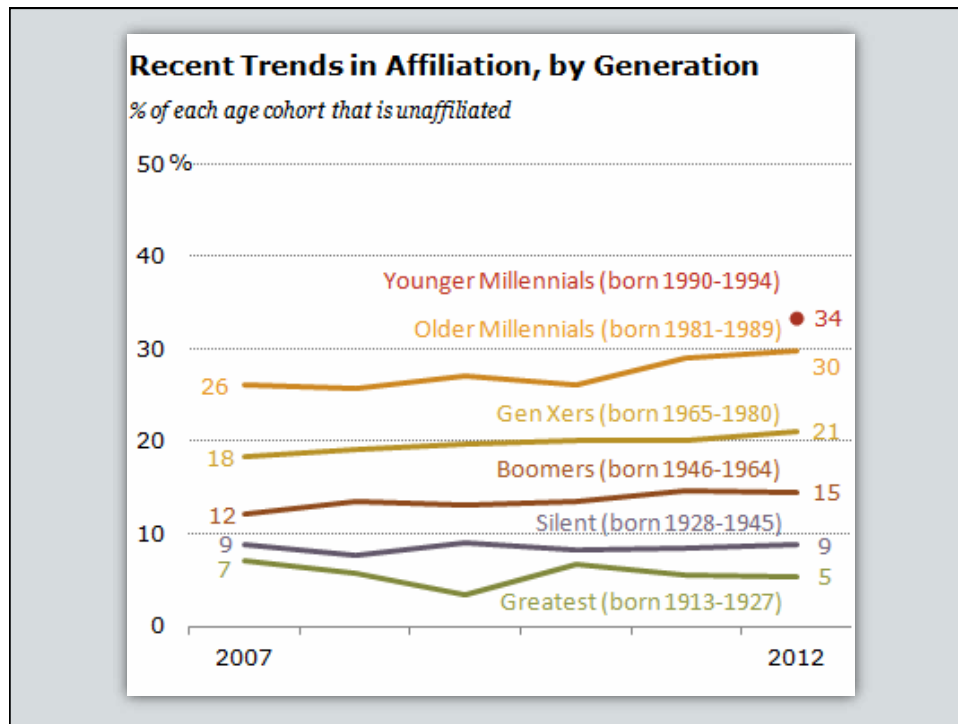
## Changing Religiosity

- 20% of Americans claim no religious affiliation
- 32% of 18-29 year olds
- 18% of 18-39 year olds say that are “spiritual, but not religious”



### Religious Affiliation by Age





## Changing Religiosity

- According to Pew Research, Americans do **not** generally become more affiliated as they move through the life cycle from young adulthood through marriage, parenting, middle age and retirement.

## Changing Religiosity

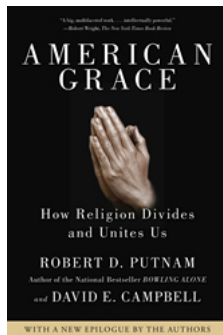
- With few exceptions the unaffiliated say they are **not** looking for a religion that would be right for them. Overwhelmingly, they think that religious organizations are too concerned with money and power, too focused on rules and too involved in politics.

## Changing Religiosity

The number of religiously unaffiliated is growing . . . .

- because of Americans who rarely go to services are more willing than in the past to drop their religious attachments altogether.
- because of generational replacement, the gradual supplanting of older generations by newer ones.

## Generational Change



- The rise of the Nones in the 1990s was heavily driven by generational factors.
- The incidence of Nones was about 5-7% in the pre-boomer generations who reach adulthood before 1960
- Double to about 10-15% among the boomers (who came of age in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s)
- After 2000 doubled again to about 20-30% among the post-boomers (who came of age in the 1990s and 2000s).

## Generational Change

- Being raised with no religion fueled cohort change
- The Nones were disproportionately raised in nonreligious backgrounds, so some of them are the children of boomers who have discarded formal religious affiliations a generation ago.
- On the other hand, the rise of the Nones is apparent even among young people whose parents were religiously observant.

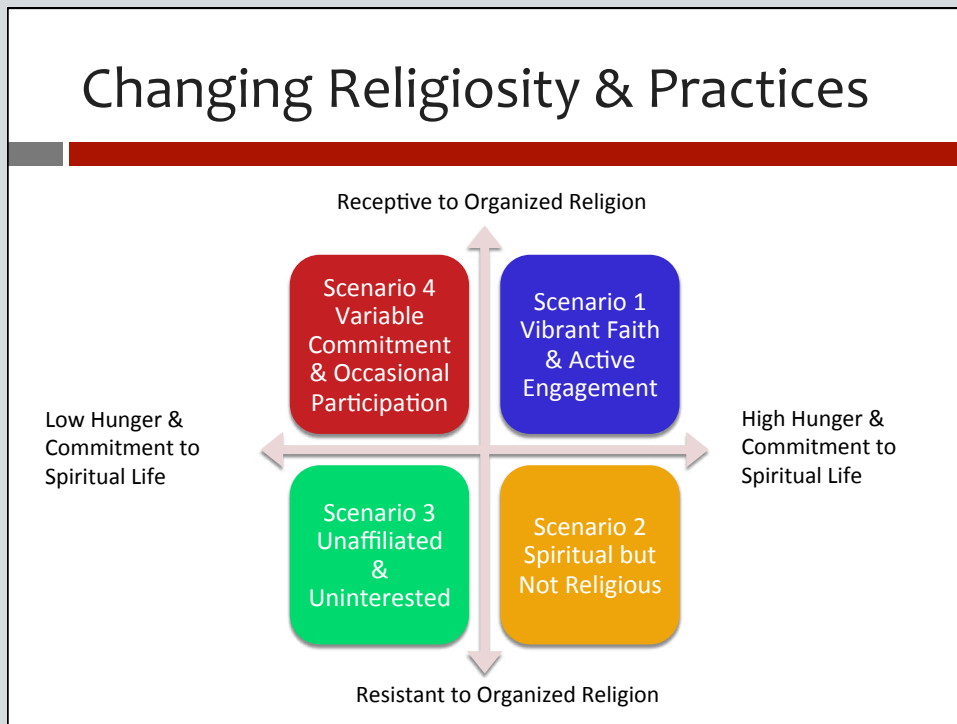
## Generational Change

Putnam and Campbell suggest the dramatic contrast between a young generation increasingly liberal on certain moral and lifestyle issues (though still potentially open to religious feelings and ideals) and an older generation of religious leaders who seemed to them consumed by the political fight against homosexuality and gay marriage was an important source of the second aftershock.

## Generational Change

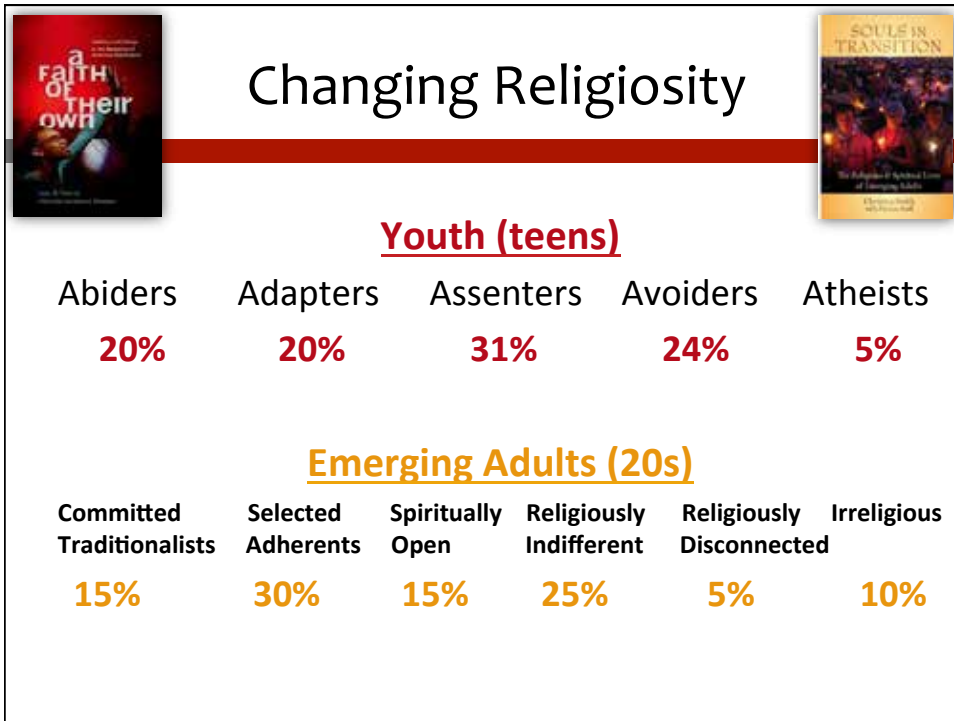
When asked why they rejected religious identification, the new Nones reported that “they became unaffiliated, as least in part, because they think of religious people as hypocritical, judgmental, or insincere. Large numbers also say they became unaffiliated because they think that religious organizations focus too much on rules and not enough on spirituality. This youthful generation seems unwilling or unable to distinguish the stance of the most visible, most political, and most conservative religious leaders from organized religion in general.

## Changing Religiosity & Practices



## Changing Religiosity & Practices





## Adolescent Religiosity

1. **Abiders:** highest levels of religiosity and practice: believe in God, pray regularly, engage in personal religious practice, attend services, serve others, think about the meaning of life; most likely to say their religion is the only true faith
2. **Adapters:** high levels of personal religiosity + accepting of other people's faiths + attend religious services more sporadically
3. **Assenters:** believe in God and feel somewhat close to God, but they are minimally engaged with their faith and practice only occasionally. Religion is tangential to other aspects of their lives.
4. **Avoiders:** believe in God but have low levels of religious practice; God is distant, impersonal; and often don't name a religious affiliation.
5. **Atheists:** don't believe in God and don't attend services.

## Emerging Adults Religiosity

1. **Committed Traditionalists:** strong religious faith; articulate beliefs; active practice; commitment to faith is a significant part of their identities and moral reasoning, at least somewhat regularly involved in some religious group
2. **Selected Adherents:** believe and perform certain aspects of their religious traditions but neglect and ignore others; more discriminating about what they are willing to adopt of their religious tradition's beliefs and practices
3. **Spiritually Open:** not very committed to a religious faith but are nonetheless receptive to and at least mildly interested in some spiritual or religious matters.

## Emerging Adults Religiosity

4. **Religiously Indifferent:** neither care to practice religion nor oppose it; simply not invested in religion either way; too distracted with and invested in other things in life and unconcerned with matters of faith to pay any real attention to religion.
5. **Religiously Disconnected:** have little to no exposure or connection to religious people, ideas, or organizations; neither interested in nor opposed to religion; faith simply has not been a part of their lives in any significant way.
6. **Irreligious:** hold skeptical attitudes about and make critical arguments against religion generally, rejecting the idea of personal faith