Helping Students Find the Quiet in Their Noisy Lives

University life is a constant barrage of activities, media and people. Students are connected to their laptops, iPods and cell phones 24/7, 365.

However, even the most social and digitally connected students need quiet. As youth leaders, we should find ways to help them understand this need and develop ways to experience the gifts of disciplines such as meditation, silence and solitude in the midst of their busy lives.

The Bible frequently reminds us of the timeless human need for silence. Look at the example of Christ who regularly got away by Himself to a quiet place and instructed His disciples to do the same. Elijah experienced God not in the earthquake, but in the still, small whisper.

Researchers at UCLA investigated the spiritual and religious lives of more than 100,000 students over the course of several years. Their research, published in Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students’ Inner Lives by Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin and Jennifer A. Lindholm (Jossey Bass 2010), reveals some telling factors about the spiritual life of university students.

The Bad News: The authors’ main finding is no surprise: University life can be pretty rough on the spiritual lives of students. Most students attend church less and shift their religious values. Among the most negative influences on the spiritual lives of students are TV, video games and frequent drinking and partying, none of which is hard to find on campus.

The Good News: However, even as they deal with the new realities of university life, most students continue to wrestle with their beliefs. Among the common positive influences are leadership development opportunities, engaging in service to others, giving of time and money, and engaging in practices such as prayer, journaling and meditation. As Christians, we call these the spiritual disciplines. Those who practice these disciplines not only show positive spiritual growth, but also tend to do better academically and socially, are better prepared for graduation and have a greater sense of personal satisfaction.

The Opportunity: This research demonstrates that there is a real need to help students find the quiet in their quiet times. So what can we do with the young people we lead?

Take time to teach about the disciplines. Have students engage in some regular practice of silence and solitude. Help students understand silence and quiet as more than just not talking, but truly being alone with God.

That means there are times when distractions such as iPods and praise music (which is often pretty noisy) need to be turned off so students really can be alone with God - even if only for a few moments in the course of a day.

Encourage your students to take a break from the media and people barrage so they can listen to the voice of God. This does not happen easily, especially on campus. Most of us too quickly fill the void of silence with some kind of comforting background noise.

Research tells us that investing in quiet pays off. Even more so, Jesus calls us to it. Help your students take time to be still (and quiet) and know that He is God.

Written by Evan Hunter, Director of the Ivy Jungle Network, an association of people in campus ministry.

Taken from www.youthworker.com

The Opportunity: This research demonstrates that there is a real need to help students find the quiet in their quiet times. So what can we do with the young people we lead?

Take time to teach about the disciplines. Have students engage in some regular practice of silence and solitude. Help students understand silence and quiet as more than just not talking, but truly being alone with God.

That means there are times when distractions such as iPods and praise music (which is often pretty noisy) need to be turned off so students really can be alone with God - even if only for a few moments in the course of a day.

Encourage your students to take a break from the media and people barrage so they can listen to the voice of God. This does not happen easily, especially on campus. Most of us too quickly fill the void of silence with some kind of comforting background noise.

Research tells us that investing in quiet pays off. Even more so, Jesus calls us to it. Help your students take time to be still (and quiet) and know that He is God.

Written by Evan Hunter, Director of the Ivy Jungle Network, an association of people in campus ministry.

Taken from www.youthworker.com
It still has the occult elements that made the series such a controversial phenomenon, but this conclusion to the youthful adventures of Harry Potter contains some Christian allegorical elements that are surprisingly overt and redemptive and will remind some of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and His resurrection.

Taken from www.movieguide.org

Do you agree with the review that it's ok watch questionable movies if they have a good theme? What do you think this exposure to witchcraft and magic will do to young Christian teens and youth? What happens when serious and dangerous topics such as witchcraft are portrayed as entertaining and exciting?

Peer pressure is not all bad, in fact it is essential to proper social development that we do learn to “follow the crowd”. This is how we learn acceptable social norms; that is, how we are expected to act in the world in order to be good people. The trick is learning to tell the difference between following the crowd and blindly following the crowd. It takes a person of great character and self confidence to work peer pressure the right way!

The difference between good peer pressure and bad peer pressure can be summed up with a simple comparison - when it is good, you are a member of the crowd; when it is bad, you are part of a mob. If peer pressure is telling you to do something without questioning why, to do something you know is wrong, or to do something you feel uncomfortable doing, it is safe to say this is bad. This is the kind of behaviour that leads to a “mob mentality”, that is when the group is acting as one and no one seems to be thinking about consequences or outcomes. NOT COOL! If peer pressure is telling you to act in a generally appropriate way, to do the right thing when you may not otherwise, or to do more good than harm it is safe to say this is good. As long as following the crowd doesn’t cause you to act without consideration, following is not always a bad thing to do. In a situation where peer pressure is good, individuals in the groups will be acting as individual parts of a whole, each working WITH the other. A good rule is this; if it makes you feel bad it IS bad for you!

Taken from www.teenadvice.about.com

As Christians we have the additional counsel and advice that can be found in the Bible. Within it's pages are moral guidelines that transcend culture & time.