



L MESSAGE

Connecting with Youth

The L-Message and previous episodes can be found at www.seymouruc.org.au/l-message

I have heard several comments from people wondering what has happened to the L-Message. Well it's still going strong – I just wanted to make sure you were still hungry for it!

This Episode is specifically for those of you who work with young people. I'm sure everyone will get something from it, but my thoughts are directed at those of you who are in the trenches with teenagers on a regular basis.

This week I had a funeral of an elderly gentleman who although not well known around the town spent his years building into his family. One of his grand daughters is a young person who attends the youth group I'm involved with. I spoke to her after the funeral as she was upset. As we were talking her family came over to see if she was OK, and she would respond to them by saying "Yeah I'm OK, and this is Ralph, he's my minister." Now this girl had been to Church once, we'd had only a couple of superficial conversations (until her granddad's death), and it appeared that she really had no interest in the Christian faith... Yet I was *her minister!* I discovered shortly after that she was a lot more interested in Christianity than I'd given her credit for, but I was blown away by the standing that I had in her eyes.

If you'd have asked me how was I viewed in her eyes I would have said that I was "a distant youth leader who's there when I go on Friday nights." Which is obviously not the case.

All this leads me to a conclusion that has been knocking on the door of my thoughts for a long while now: We can never fully know where we stand in the eyes of the young people we love and serve, and often we're relied upon and appreciated far more than we think we are.

It's been said by many people time and time again but we can say it especially about young people: 'Kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.' Translated this means something more and more people are realizing these days, that young people are guided by the intensity of relationships. Relational connections for young people operate like an anchor. They hold them to something which eventually defines who they will become. We already know this; a young person at 14 falls in with the wrong crowd, starts graffitiing, smoking, drinking and so on, and is lead to a place that will ultimately define who he or she is. How did they get into that predicament, well there are a lot of factors involved, but ultimately there was a relational connection that held them to that kind of behaviour.

Scary isn't it? The good news is it can work in our favour! If we spend time relationally connecting to the young people we love and want to serve, then the theory goes that if that connection is strong enough they will be held to that which we represent and ultimately will be defined by it. I want the kids I know to be defined by the God who anchors me, and I know that if I spend time relationally investing in and authentically connecting to these kids, then the outcome will be just that.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

It's been said that for a new person visiting your Church, that they need to have two strong relational connections within the first two months or they will drift away.