

YOUTH AND OUR CULTURE

BY DAVID V. COOPER, IV

I love challenges. Challenges give me that competitive feeling that keeps me going to the very end despite how hard they may seem. So when I was asked to write an article about how youth are influenced by the “culture” in our everyday existence as Christians, I jumped at it with vigor and excitement and asked God to give me the things to write. As I’m sure you are already aware, when God speaks to you, He may at times just point things out in your life before you point the finger at someone else. So while you read this, take into consideration that though I may be in a different stage in my walk with Jesus than you, I have gone or am going through this as well.

As youth, we are often given to mimicking what we see if we think it will boost our “cool factor” (if you will). Unfortunately, there’s not much originality in youth anymore. There are few left who dare to lead the pack and live in the land of individualism. When one tries to venture out to be who they really are, they are looked at as snobby or weird. It’s a shame that the very factor that fuels diversity is slowly dwindling among us.

For example, a youth could be shopping for sneakers and find a pair that catches their eye and purchases them. The person arrives at school quite pleased with how they look after coordinating the outfit to match with the sneakers. They go inside when a group of people (most likely popular with everyone) approaches them and because they don’t “approve” of the sneakers, they come at the person. Being the cruel monsters that we can be at times, one could only imagine what that person went through the whole day. Now, you can rest assured that when the same individual goes back to shop for sneakers they will not be shopping with that same individual mind-set. They are going to buy what is “culturally approved” in their school.

Even more unfortunate, the same thing goes on in the church but on a whole new playing field. As Christians, in general, the Bible calls us to be separate, holy and set apart as examples for those who don’t know Jesus as their Savior. Imagine what we, as youth, go through when it comes to our walk with Christ. We must behave a certain way when the “culture” tells us to do otherwise. The culture says it’s okay to have premarital sex, but, as Christian youth, we are called to be pure and holy before God, to be virgins until marriage when then God blesses sex every time you have it. Though the way I put it sounds facetious, it’s truth. What the youth in general don’t realize is that when you have sex before the eyes of the almighty God you have just been married.

If one pays close attention, one would realize that everything that is “culturally accepted” is God forbidden. There are even cultures in the body of Christ. Some youth may try to get into God’s presence, as illustrated in the Psalms 42:1 when it says, “As the deer panteth after the water brook so does my soul after You.” They may truly want God but may have a hard time breaking free of the fake, yet present culture of the religious. One may look around the church for no real reason but to observe before going into serious praise and worship only to find a group of youth not participating in the lifting up of the name of Jesus. Now, the youth was about to kick it into praise mode, but now they fear teasing from that group if they see that person participating.

Then you see a transformation from excitement to be in the house of the Lord to a nonchalant look of “when is this going to be over”. This is why during exhortation it is very important to tune everything out so it’s just you and God. Trust a brotha’ on this one. It may be hard at first, but it will sure pay off! I know I may sound whack when I say this, but it’s a risk I’m more than ready to take. Getting in to God’s presence is cooler than looking like an old prune during service! I mean really, we have older people being more energetic than we are when it comes to praising God. We’re younger; we should be just as energetic if not even more than the adults! God forbid I try to make this a contest, but if you are anything like me I know you’ll appreciate the challenge I’m placing before you. The Bible instructs you to magnify the Lord with me, not to look at me funny when I do! Can you imagine what our services would be like if youth and adults worshiped the Lord in unison! Man, I’m gettin’ hype thinking about it!

If we can just find the courage and faith to step out from what the culture says and enter into what God has for us I assure you, as I’m an Eagles fan, we would send a better message to the world as a whole.

David Van Cooper, IV is 15 years old and an active member of Heaven Bound Youth Ministry. He is the son of David Van Cooper, III who writes for the “Sound and Spirit” section of the “Beyond” magazine.