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THE CHURCH'S MASCULINE MATURITY CRISIS:
TOWARD A BIBLICAL COUNSELING PARADIGM
FOR ENGAGING EMERGING ADULTS

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THE CHURCH'S MASCULINE MATURITY CRISIS:
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The work for this thesis is dedicated to the men in the younger generation of the church. May it be a benefit to those who seek to have a deeper understanding of the Bible's stated purposes and mandates for mature masculinity and calls for leadership, and may it encourage others to seek a life that honors the Lord Jesus Christ through obedience to God's will for the lives of all godly men. Grace and Peace to all who read.

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PREFACE

This work represents the input of many people who have had an impact on my life. I would like to thank my wife, Jackie, who has stood by my side as I have pursued my seminary education. I could not be more blessed to have you as my gift from the Lord in this life! To my parents, Michael and Kathleen, I want to express my gratefulness for your faithfulness to raise us (kids) in the fear and discipline of the Lord and for your constant support of Jackie and me as we pursued seminary and as we moved across-country to pursue doctoral studies. Thank you to my brother, Erik and his family, my sister, Holly and her family for your constant support and prayer for Jackie and me. Thank you to both Holly and Pam for helping me to edit this project.

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Kyle John Swanson

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is hard to imagine a world without influence from young adults. The teen and young adult years are often the most formative, expressive, and creative years of life. Teenagers expressing passionate perspectives have been credited with everything from triggering the French Revolution to the founding of Rock and Roll.¹ The Puritan movement in the church began in the fervent and passionate hearts of teenagers studying theological truth at Cambridge, Christchurch College, and Kings College.² Jonathan Edwards penned his seventy resolutions that paved a Godward road for his entire life and ministry when he was just nineteen years of age, resolutions that sparked a fire of spiritual awakening throughout the American colonies.³ Youthful passion can be seen throughout history, often altering it dramatically for the better or sometimes for the worse.

One could argue that youthful passions stem from hormonal explosions occurring beneath the surface driving the unbridled need for recognition, acceptance, and a break from convention. Or it could be that the cacophony of new sensory experiences experienced keenly for the first time in a sophomore mode of self-awareness stokes a craving for self-expression and a contribution to the current society's mark on history. Whatever the cause, young adults have made their mark throughout the generations of

¹Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 117–34.

²Timothy Beougher, “Richard Baxter: A Puritan Study on Pastoral Counseling” (lecture, SBTS Library, Louisville, January 2016).

³Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), 41–56.

world history.

Twentieth-century Western society has directed this youthful zeal and fire to be spent on searching for individualized meaning and satisfying modes of self-expression rather than following a mandate God has given in His word.⁴ Instead of recognizing the divine design of growing from boyhood into manhood and taking on responsibilities that God ordained for man to fulfill, modern Western culture has made provision for boys to remain boys, and for young men to remain young men. Yet it is critical for church leaders and biblical counselors to understand the contributing sociological factors that are uniquely faced by this generation in order to engage them in a course of godly counsel that will help to correct the influences of worldly thinking.

The Western church and Christian family are facing a crisis of leadership as there is a growing trend for boys and young men who claim Christ to neglect their God-given mandate for masculine maturity and all it entails, whether out of purpose or ignorance. Phillips notes, “We need to be godly men, and the Bible presents a masculine mandate for us to fulfill and follow.”⁵ This lack of biblical maturity stems from a two-fold cause. First, unique sociological and cultural factors of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries leading to the recognition of emerging adulthood as a unique life-phase,⁶ and second a growing biblical illiteracy and comprehension of the Christian man’s mandate toward masculine maturity and how to address the unique issues faced by

⁴Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Abo-Zena, *Emerging Adults’ Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning Making in the Age of Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). This work contains a collection of essays that specifically address and encourage the desires of emerging adults to be expressed in modes of self-discovery, spiritual exploration, sexual revolution, and a redefinition of societal values.

⁵Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God’s Calling to Men* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2010), xiii.

⁶Many of the works cited in the familiarity with literature section represent this viewpoint. Arnett’s corpus of writing has led to a comprehensive development of his theory into a worldview perspective that is dominant in the field of adolescent psychology. For more on this, review the familiarity with literature section, specifically on the works of Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and the following section of works that advanced his perspective.

the emerging adulthood demographic in the sphere of biblical counseling.⁷

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, a leading American adolescent psychologist and author of the phrase emerging adulthood (henceforth EA) argues emerging adults have a strong desire for individualistic expression, but lack the security of financial independence and career success that seemed guaranteed to previous generations.⁸ Carolyn McNamara Barry, Mona M. Abo-Zena, and Richard M. Lerner have written extensively on “meaning-making” and issues surrounding the spiritual and religious development among the EA demographic, but absent from a sound biblical construct this can lead to confusion, to the acceptance of multiple personalized outcomes, and to the denigration of distinct masculine and feminine traits.⁹

Though many have contributed to the corpus of writing that expounds on the topic of EA, Arnett’s 2000 article in *American Psychologist* is the seminal work that observed EA as a normative and accepted demographic in Western culture. It is important to understand that the notion of EA is one of observation and recognition, not of diagnosis or treatment. The goal of this thesis, therefore, is to provide a biblical and theological treatment of Arnett’s observations about EA and to establish a paradigm for biblical counseling EA men toward biblical masculine maturity so that the church may have a generation of men biblically literate of their calling as men, husbands, fathers, and who are ready and qualified to be called as the next generation of church leaders.

Additionally, this thesis will address the unique extrinsic and intrinsic factors that are shaping both the Millennial generation and the EA demographic and how, for

⁷Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate*, 137–38.

⁸Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 472–73.

⁹Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Abo-Zena, “Seeing the Forest and the Trees: How Emerging Adults Navigate Meaning-Making,” in *Emerging Adults Religious and Spirituality: Meaning Making in the Age of Transition*, ed. Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Abo Zena (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-20.

believers, the reality of those factors can be faced with godly courage when armed with wisdom from the written word of God. The EA generation is facing a set of challenges unique to any previous generation of modern Western society. This, however, does not mean that these challenges are unique in that they cannot be overcome. Each generation of human history has faced its own unique challenges and yet the men from those generations have found ways to overcome those challenges and grow into their masculine mandate. The inherent danger is that these challenges, if unaddressed, could delay the maturation of this entire generation, leaving the church vulnerable to unqualified leadership. A study of biblical imperatives for masculine maturity will show that God's standard is achievable for any and all Christian men who seek and apply the wisdom that God specifically provided in His word to address this problem.

Scope of Study

Although EA characteristics exist not only across the bulk of Western civilization and also across both genders, it is necessary to state that this study will be focused specifically on American males. Further, because much EA study is purposefully observatory and descriptive, this study is not so much a critique on the observations and demographic trends made by Arnett and others, but rather a text-based biblical analysis of how to address those unique challenges faced by this generation. Specifically, any claims that are made by the corpus of research and writing from the secular psychological worldview will be analyzed so as to recognize the fine line between descriptive analysis and prescriptive counsel.¹⁰ Some attention will also be given to the nature of truth claim bias and circular reasoning. In other words, EA lifestyles perpetuated and exacerbated based on the material research provided by those who study and write on EA.

¹⁰This thesis is not intended to be a polemic against Arnett or the descriptive nature of much of his research (or the research of those who built on what Arnett demonstrated), but representative texts will show a propensity toward capitulative counsel regarding the behavioral trends of the EA generation; thus it will be necessary to discuss both the sociological and the psychological sides of the EA research corpus.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the nature of the descriptive information coming from the sociological and psychological research concerning EA, critically review and respond to any prescriptive validation of unbiblical lifestyle trends, and to provide a concise background study for biblical counselors on how to recognize and understand the nature of EA so as to provide wisdom for this demographic in biblical counseling and discipleship situations.

Research Questions

This research must address several questions in order to come to a satisfying conclusion for how biblical counselors can understand and appropriately counsel emerging adults. Though this generation demonstrates unique cultural characteristics, one must understand the markers and factors contributing to these trends so that the counselor can be well equipped to address the needs of an EA counselee. The following questions must be asked:

1. What are the standards for adulthood or for masculine maturity?
2. What are the societal markers that dictate maturity and how do those compare with what the biblical standards for masculine maturity?
3. Why does it seem to most biblical counselors (to make a generalization, most active biblical counselors come from either Gen X or the Baby Boomer generation) that emerging adults have a hard time growing up?
4. What solutions can and should be offered to assist emerging adults in reaching biblical maturity?
5. Are counselors measuring the masculine maturity of a counselee based on biblical standards or on cultural standards passed down from the previous generation?
6. Finally, are emerging adults being counseled toward a cultural view of masculinity or a biblical one?

These questions will allow the direction of the research to be practically oriented, as well as to help differentiate between conventional cultural wisdom and

biblically mandated wisdom. The goal is for biblical counselors to understand the factors that make speaking into the lives of this generation unique while providing them with a text-oriented framework that will impart timeless biblical truth. Only this approach will accomplish the goal of bringing these men into conformity with God's plan for their maturation, sanctification, and future leadership over their own lives, families, and ministries.

Familiarity with the Literature

The survey of literature on the subjects of emerging adulthood and biblical masculinity will follow four major categories. The first will be twentieth-century writings that set the stage both sociologically and psychologically for the development of Arnett's theory. The second category will examine the writings of Jeffrey Jensen Arnett himself. Being the seminal author who first coined the phrase *emerging adulthood*, Arnett's work will be examined with a view toward both his positive contributions in the recognition of EA and the difficulties that have arisen with its recognition.

The third category is comprised of authors who have accepted Arnett's conclusions regarding the EA demographic and have written extensively¹¹ on the issues surrounding EA, including religious trends, sex and morality, positive youth development, and the ever-changing American economy and job market. This category will greatly expand on the work of Arnett, but will also use his research as its foundation and platform and will demonstrate both secular and spiritualized offerings of counsel and direction to the EA demographic. Research will show that this category gives a concerted effort on man's part to solve problems using conventional secular wisdom while not considering the biblical mandates for masculinity and masculine maturity, and male leadership. Instead, a man-centered worldview will propose solutions fit to raise self-

¹¹Christian Smith, foreword to *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality*, ed. Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Abo-Zena (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), xi.

esteem and encourage individualistic paths of self-fulfillment.¹²

Lastly, the fourth will cover biblically based writings that have sought to address the issues facing the EA demographic from a biblical worldview, expositing God's Word to find His wisdom for addressing the issues facing young men in the transition to godly maturity.

Twentieth-Century Sociological Precursors to Emerging Adulthood

Grace Palladino's work *Teenagers: An American History* is an excellent historical survey of the recognition and influence of the teenage and young adult subset in the twentieth century.¹³ She examines each major time period and demographic or sociological shift of the twentieth century and breaks down the effect those shifts had on the teenage populous, as well as how various trends compounded on each other to create a tidal wave of sociological change in the latter half of the twentieth century.

William Strauss and Neil Howe have co-authored a work entitled *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584–2069*, which examines the various rhythms and cycles of American generations.¹⁴ This is also the first published work to recognize and interact with the "Millennial" generation. There are fascinating insights as to the past patterns of generational characteristics and how those may be repeated in future generations.

Finally, Arnett mentions three foundational authors that influenced his

¹²Though no particular work is singled out, the corpus in general will offer a perspective that is generally man-centered in its descriptive analysis. The category as a whole will build a picture of EA and give opinions and even prescriptions as to how Emerging Adults can find fulfillment and realize potential in different ways than previous generations. This information is needed to show a contrast to a biblical perspective. Much of the bibliography will reflect the works of authors such as Arnett, Erickson, Smith, Cote, Barry, Nelson, and Lerner.

¹³Palladino, *Teenagers*, xi–xx.

¹⁴William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584–2069* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 7–18.

development of EA in his first article on the subject. Those works are *Childhood and Society*¹⁵ and *Identity: Youth and Crisis* by E. H. Erikson,¹⁶ as well as a work by Daniel J. Levinson entitled *The Seasons of a Man's Life*,¹⁷ and lastly from Kenneth Keniston, *Youth and Dissent: The Rise of the New Opposition*.¹⁸ All of these are cited as important and groundbreaking works that helped to define and shape the views of youth, adolescence, and young adulthood in the twentieth century. Arnett saw these as foundational works in need of further development.

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett

Arnett's 2000 article in *American Psychologist*, entitled "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," was the first published work to formally introduce EA as a proposed unique subset of American society as a demographic, in its subjective perceptions, and in its identity explorations. Out of this article came *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens to the Early Twenties*, published in 2004.¹⁹ Arnett greatly expanded on his original proposition in identifying five distinguishing characteristics of this time period: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, a feeling of "in between," and unparalleled possibilities for direction and transformation in life.²⁰

Though these two works are the primary source of material upon which the

¹⁵Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993), 21–23.

¹⁶Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968), 15–44.

¹⁷Daniel J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1978), ix–xiv.

¹⁸Kenneth Keniston, *Youth and Dissent: The Rise of the New Opposition* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 3–26.

¹⁹Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), viii.

²⁰Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 470–74.

corpus of EA material rests, Arnett has contributed to several scholarly articles, as well as textbooks like *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*,²¹ which is a common textbook used in public schools to teach young teenagers what to expect in the EA years of life. All of his major perspectives and worldview developments can be traced back to his 2000 article and 2004 publication.

Emerging Adulthood Theory Developed

In trying to identify issues facing the EA demographic and to offer explanations and solutions, many writers have embraced the worldview of Arnett and added to the growing corpus of writing on EA. Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Abo-Zena both contributed to and compiled a series of essays known as *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality*.²² This collection was written to address a wide range of topics including parental roles in the lives of emerging adults, potential benefits of spirituality and religion in the EA demographic, how the digital media age has changed how the EA demographic interacts with religious institutions, and gender and sexual roles in the religion of emerging adults.

Following a similar trajectory, Richard M. Lerner compiled several articles focused on the positive spiritual development of adolescents (and by extension, emerging adults) in *Positive Youth Development and Spirituality*. Lerner's premise was that no one in the field of developmental psychology had put in a concerted effort to research the spiritual development of young adults, but rather had strictly focused on the cognitive, psychological, and moral development only.²³ For this volume he compiled articles that

²¹Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 5th ed. (London: Pearson Education, 2012).

²²This list is representative of the various articles compiled in *Emerging Adults Religiousness and Spirituality*. Though not all of the essays in this work are relevant to this study, the topics mentioned above can be found on pp. 21, 39, 59, 93, 171, and 186.

²³Richard M. Lerner, *Positive Youth Development & Spirituality* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008), viii.

looked at various perspectives of spiritual development in the lives of young adults, examining self-identity, religious upbringing, ethics, civic engagement, and views on the afterlife.

Christian Smith's perspective in *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* looks at the more difficult and challenging aspects of EA. Smith demonstrates the fluctuating morality found in a plurality of explored ideas, the ease in which young adults fall captive to consumerism, issues of drug and sexual exploration, as well as trending disengagement in the civic and political arena as compared to previous generations.²⁴ Smith's work observes that there is indeed a dark void in the spiritual vitality of an EA demographic devoid of biblical wisdom and truth. Smith also contributes insights on the patters of spirituality of EA in *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*.²⁵

Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, authors of *Premarital Sex in America*, provide an interesting study into the sexual ethics and practices of EA.²⁶ The work demonstrates functional outworking of the EA worldview through a detailed look at the sexual habits, patterns, and preferences of youth and emerging adults in American society. It also touches on how today's sexual ethic was shaped by previous generations in the twentieth century.

Finally, Richard Dunn and Jana L. Sundene highlight the nature of leadership and discipleship among emerging adults. This monograph highlights the gap in evangelical literature that will be addressed in the following chapters of this work.²⁷

²⁴Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–4.

²⁵Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–9.

²⁶Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think About Marrying* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5–13.

²⁷Richard Dunn and Jana L. Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2012), 13–23.

Biblical Insights

From a biblical counseling standpoint, it will be necessary to employ the works of Jay Adams to help lay a foundation for approaches to biblical counseling that will become pertinent to this discussion. Two works in particular will be featured: *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*,²⁸ as well as *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*.²⁹

John Street has written extensively in the modern biblical counseling movement and has compiled a useful collection of essays in *Men Counseling Men: A Biblical Guide to the Major Issues Men Face*.³⁰ This collection examines biblical examples for men to follow in how to lead in their homes, how to relate to God and to other people, how to lead, how to handle sin, and various other counseling issues.

Disciplines of a Godly Man by R. Kent Hughes is a collection of topical discussions on various compartments of life that require biblical and spiritual discipline.³¹ He addresses human and spiritual relationships, discipline over matters of the soul, matters of character, and issues of ministry and family. Hughes' book is one of supreme value and importance for topical study on various issues of godly discipline for men.

Richard D. Phillips has written a stellar work filled with practical godly wisdom in *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men*.³² His approach is both theological and pastoral in nature, addressing biblical examples of masculine roles and responsibilities ranging from worker/provider and father/family protector, to that of a

²⁸Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); this work will help establish the foundational approach to all pertinent aspects of the BCM.

²⁹Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 10–19.

³⁰John Street, *Men Counseling Men: A Biblical Guide to the Major Issues Men Face* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 13–18.

³¹R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 10th anniversary ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 11–20.

³²Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate*, xiii–xv.

servant leader.

Stuart Scott's book *The Exemplary Husband* demonstrates a pastoral heart and a counselor's mentality in directing men in their God-given role as a husband and his responsibility to love, lead, and serve his wife, as well as how to deal with his own failures along the way.

The pastoral staff of Grace Community Church have provided helpful articles compiled and edited by Nathan Busenitz in *Men of the Word: Insights for Life from Men Who Walked with God*. The authors all focused their writing on either a character from Scripture as a biblical example of an ideal character quality (such as Abraham as a man of faith, David as a man who truly repented, etc.) or on a specific text-based biographical study to give examples of godly living.

Bringing more of a thought-critical perspective, Thomas Bergler's *From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity* connects the problem of twentieth-century civilization's view of solutions to youth problems to how the church is both addressing the issues and contributing to the problem.³³ Bergler's critiques are helpful insights into the socio-economic and political issues faced by the EA demographic and how society has perpetuated excusing away responsibility due to circumstance. Bergler's main point is that the American church at large has contributed greatly to the problem by allowing itself to conform to immaturity rather than counseling immaturity toward maturity.

Void in the Literature

A gaping hole exists in the corpus of literature written for biblical counselors on how to specifically address EA and masculine maturity in counseling. Biblical counselors must work to understand the unique challenges that are faced by EA while

³³Thomas Bergler, *From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 1–53.

providing a constructive biblical and theological framework designed to engage and help these young men progress toward their call for biblical masculine maturity.

Many have contributed excellent biblical research on training Christian men on what it means to be a godly man. Though these have been helpful treatments, no direct examination or contribution to the field of biblical counseling exists in which men are counseled through generational challenges for the purpose of working toward the qualifications of church leadership. There does not exist a bridge between the exegetical materials of Scripture that speak to godly masculine maturity and the crisis facing the modern church regarding biblical masculine maturity in a biblical counseling/EA relationship.

There must be a call for examination of the EA demographic through a study of biblical masculine standards in order to differentiate between extenuating generational circumstances and possibly sinful behavioral traits. Scripture alone can speak to the conscience of the EA individual, through biblical counseling and discipleship relationships, as to whether or not certain behavioral traits are sinful or simply trials to overcome. Either way, the goal of this study is to provide a paradigm for spiritual growth and maturity for EA young men through biblical counseling so as to fulfill the mandates that God has given to all men in His word.

Thesis

The church is suffering a masculine maturity crisis, particularly as the EA demographic moves closer toward roles of church leadership. This trend is markedly noticed by several authors with whom this thesis interacts.

Deferred maturity, however, is not unique to the church. Helen Smith has recognized this cultural issue in *Men on Strike*. In her discussion of sociological trends regarding masculinity, she states, “It seems that the task of living up to women’s expectations is so high that many men just don’t measure up. They simply give up and

find a life that brings them some reasonable amount of comfort.”³⁴ Her claim is rooted in the idea that society has vilified previous generational chivalric attitudes and that masculinity in general must be decried as evil.³⁵ This trend begins, Christina Hoff Sommers notes, in the school system for young boys. She writes,

Boys today bear the burden of several powerful cultural trends: a therapeutic approach to education that valorizes feelings and denigrates competition and risk, zero-tolerance policies that punish normal antics of young males, and a gender equity movement that views masculinity as predatory. Natural Make exuberance is no longer tolerated.³⁶

The combination of these two perspectives shows that the culture war against masculinity is bound to be faced in the church by all emerging adults who have spent any time interacting in the public schools or in western society at large.

Social and cultural factors in Western society have led to emerging adults taking a longer path toward biblical maturity and adulthood. Though some contributing factors are unavoidable, and though these differing paths are not inherently wrong or bad, it is necessary to examine the major contributing factors and offer hope and wisdom through a paradigm for biblical counseling that will employ the timeless wisdom of God’s word in addressing any young man’s unique circumstances while leading them toward godly wisdom and biblical masculine maturity. Specifically, this discussion will be aimed at EA men who can be identified as potential future leaders in the church. Though this is not a thesis on leadership development, it is important to identify potential future leaders and to offer them counsel and biblical training for the purpose of getting them prepared and qualified to be considered for future positions as elders and deacons.

Through intentional biblical counseling, where issues of masculine maturity

³⁴Helen Smith, *Men on Strike: Why Men Are Boycotting Marriage, Fatherhood, and the American Dream—And Why It Matters* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 134.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 120.

³⁶Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Policies Are Harming Our Young Men*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 39–40.

can be addressed in a one-on-one setting, EA young men can be counseled, mentored, and disciplined on how to overcome the unique factors and challenges faced by their generation, and to persevere in their faith to a point of maturity where Jesus Christ would personally hand them leadership of a local church body through service as an elder or deacon. It is necessary to have a clarified worldview of biblical masculine maturity, through a study of selected biblical texts that will help to build a foundational picture of God's calling for men, so that this generation-in-wait can be prepared to passionately embrace the mantle of masculine mature leadership for the church.

Biblical Counseling: A Working Definition

For the sake of this volume it is necessary to state what biblical counseling is and for whom it exists. Biblical counseling, by necessity, is Christian relational enterprise that is wholly biblically based. The principles of holy Scripture must be practiced in their entirety in order to find success in the Christian life, and thus biblical counseling must be firmly rooted in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.³⁷ Biblical counseling can be defined, in its simplest form, as a discipleship conversation that leads to sanctified change. This definition sets biblical counseling apart from other forms of counseling. It requires the counselor to be a mature believer, and the counselee to be a Christian who is willing to be counseled. The dynamic must be both relational and reciprocal, and must be between followers of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to establish the groundwork and direction for the nature and direction for the research and materials that will be presented over the

³⁷These statements are representative of the biblical counseling movement as a whole, insofar as those who practice biblical counseling hold to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. For a more detailed discussion on the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling, see Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 35–64.

following four chapters. The following material will present a survey study into the history and development of EA and the major contributions of writing on the subject, and give a background to the worldviews faced by emerging adults. Following that, a detailed study of biblical texts from both the OT and NT deemed relevant to the foundational understanding of biblical masculine maturity will be presented. The final chapter will offer a paradigm biblical counselors can consider when going into counseling or discipleship relationships with emerging adult young men. The goal of this thesis will be to equip biblical counselors to come alongside young men in the church who exhibit characteristics of emerging adulthood for the purpose of shepherding them toward a biblical lifestyle of masculine maturity through application of God's word to their lives.

CHAPTER 2

EMERGING ADULTHOOD: A HISTORY, DEFINITION, AND BIBLICAL APPROACH

This chapter presents a brief generational history of the twentieth century, elucidating aspects of each generation that are pertinent to the discussion of EA. Each generation presented brings a unique story, perspective, and contribution to the research presented regarding EA and how counselors should understand and approach this Millennial subset. With this presentation of generational history, concise definitions of terms and a history of the developmental life-stage of EA as a sociological study and psychological profile will be explored. The chapter closes with a biblical exhortation to help both sides of the counseling relationship approach the situation with a biblical perspective for a God-desired outcome.

The Twentieth Century: Teenagers, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials

The twentieth century stands as the most unique century possibly in human history. Never has an epoch of such dramatic change in modern human society occurred. In 1900, the population of Earth was roughly 1.6 billion people. By 2000 the population had exploded to nearly 6 billion.¹ The primary modes of transportation have shifted from horseback/horse-drawn carriage, steamships, and the railroad to automobiles and jumbo jets.² Further, technology developed from the assembly line to the personal computer and

¹Esteban Ortiz-Ospina and Max Roser, "World Population Growth," OurWorldinData.org, 2016, accessed October 20, 2016, <https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth/>.

²Tim Lambert, "A Brief History of Transport," 2016, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://www.localhistories.org/transport.html>.

smart phone, fundamentally changing the way the world communicates, interacts, and perpetuates advancements in knowledge, medicine, the arts, and all that defines Western civilization.³

The Birth of the Teenager in the G.I. Generation

Teenagers first became a recognized and normalized subset of American society during the 1940s and subsequent decades, though the term originates in the nineteenth century.⁴ Interestingly, Palladino notes that it was not sociologists, psychologists, or pastoral leaders who first identified this group, but rather marketing executives who saw a new subset economic group that could be targeted for new product sales.⁵ Because of the change in the post-Great Depression job market, it became more difficult to provide the jobs that boys were expected to take post primary school, so students typically continued on to high school. Most late teenage girls would previously have married soon after their peer-age boys took jobs, but since those boys in large part continued into high school. So did the girls, thus creating a new societal norm.⁶

It is interesting to note that the recognition of teenagers as a societal subset was an economic decision (both the faltering job market and the product marketing executives) rather than a psychological one. It was not as if this new group suddenly emerged and became unable to function, but rather they adapted to the new reality until the patterns normalized. Magazines were produced to market specifically to these groups, providing them with editorial articles to help them navigate issues as well as to provide a

³Robert Angus Buchanan, "History of Technology: The 20th Century," September 7, 2010, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/history-of-technology/The-20th-century>.

⁴Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), xiii.

⁵Ibid., xiv–xxii.

⁶Ibid., 5–15.

platform for marketers to sell them products. *Seventeen* magazine for girls came to life in the 1940s primarily to market fashion to the newly minted independent thinking group.⁷ Similarly, *American Boy and Boy's Life* provided insights for teenage boys on how to make money, problem-solve, and what latest gadgets would help them in their ventures.⁸

The zeitgeist of these early twentieth-century generations was not a mindset of entitlement or defeatism. Because of the recognition granted to them by society, many emboldened teenagers desired independence and a break from the conventional wisdom of their parents. They looked at the problems caused by the economy that altered their futures (from stable jobs and families to high school and uncertainty) and offered their parents' generation ire and distrust.⁹ However, that distrust led to innovation and adaptation with a new sense of empowerment rather than into despair. Strauss and Howe note that this generation, which they coin the "G.I. Generation" (born between 1900–1924), had characteristics of "optimistic rationalism."¹⁰ They were a generation who understood that they needed to be self-starters, innovators, and leaders. They had no social safety net (Social Security, Welfare, etc.) on which to rely. Much like the migrant generations of the nineteenth century, they felt as though they needed to claw their way to success, relying on their own tenacity, sagacity, and self-will to accomplish their goals.¹¹

Pertinent to this study is the nature of change, economic uncertainty, and the characteristic response of the current generation. Psychologists and sociologists will often

⁷Jane Hu, "When We Were 'Seventeen': A History in 47 Covers," September 28, 2012, accessed November 11, 2016, <https://theawl.com/when-we-were-seventeen-a-history-in-47-covers-d53f4fa677ee#.w5lum5nsx>.

⁸Palladino, *Teenagers*, 19–20.

⁹*Ibid.*, 3–6.

¹⁰William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584–2069* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 261.

¹¹The primary idea of the comparison between the G.I. Generation and previous immigrant generations comes from the similarities in self-sufficiency, ingenuity, desperation, optimism, and resiliency. For more information on the nineteenth-century waves of ethnic migration, see Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

argue that emerging adults (the focus of this study) in the Millennial generation face unique challenges that force them to take a longer, windier road to maturity.¹² In contrast, the G.I. Generation was faced with enormous challenges (including two world wars, the Great Depression, etc.) and yet, without a safety net, they were forced to mature *faster* rather than slower. They were forced to “man up” in a very true sense. Failure meant trying again, trying something new, or dying while trying. That fighting spirit carried into the next two generations, though it manifested itself in different ways.

Boomers and Gen-Xers

Though Baby Boomers and Gen-X are two very distinct generations with different characteristics, it is necessary to limit the scope of study regarding these generations to the characteristics that make them similar to each other, but that make them distinct in characteristic from Millennials. The relational interplay between previous generations and Millennials will be examined later in this work, but it is necessary to understand the generational characteristics, expectations, standards of maturity, and relational approaches as they differ and sometimes clash with Millennial characteristics, expectations, standards, and relational approaches. This will help to shed light on how biblical counselors (those practicing typically are born from these two generations) can understand and speak to the issues faced by Millennials, and more specifically emerging adults.

Boomers and Gen-Xers differ characteristically in views of politics, sexual ethics, sociological interactions, both from each other and from the G.I. Generation.¹³ But in focusing on how they are similar, there are shocking differences between how these previous generations relate to each other versus how they relate to Millennials and vice

¹²Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 470–71.

¹³Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 305–28.

versa. For example, when faced with change, adversity, or challenge, both Boomers and Gen-Xers can be described as being tenacious, pragmatic, and self-made. They are both quick to identify with cultural trends (or subcultural trends) and they both have a powerful survival instinct, meaning they typically will put boots to the ground in an effort to get done what needs to get done.¹⁴ Contrasts will be seen later when looking at emerging adult traits under the same generational circumstances demonstrated by this Millennial subset (remember, not all Millennials are emerging adults).

The previous generations had shaped the way that later-born Boomers and Gen-Xers were brought up, schooled, and how they entered the work force. The normalization of high school and university education during and after WWII made receiving a Bachelor's degree and entering the workforce as a college-educated citizen expected. According to newstrategist.com, the percentage of Boomers and Gen-Xers who received a Bachelor's degree is nearly ten percent higher than previous generations.¹⁵ Though this report shows Millennial participation in college is higher than both Boomers and Gen-Xers, it also shows the percentage of degree holders and workforce participation remains higher in the previous two generations.¹⁶

Millennials

Millennials are those who, according to Strauss and Howe, were born between 1982–the present (this book was published in 1991).¹⁷ Thomas and Jess Rainer state the generation closed in 2000 and has now edged out the Baby Boomers as the largest generation in world history. Millennials are also characteristically the most diverse

¹⁴Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 305–28.

¹⁵Cheryl Russell, “Boomers Rank Third for Educational Attainment,” 2013, 36, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.newstrategist.com/store/files/BB8.SamplePgs.pdf>.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁷Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 335.

generation across the spectrum.¹⁸ Generally speaking, Millennials are viewed as being more self-focused, even broaching on characteristic narcissism. Though Millennials would simply see themselves as upbeat, confident, and open to change, most outside observers view them as overconfident self-admirers.¹⁹ Others, though, notice the hopeful, defining hope as the altruistic idea of doing something great for the good of the people around them (though one could see how that ties in with the narcissistic accusations), stating that any desire for a positive outcome is not for self-glory but for the good of others.²⁰ Significant to this statement is the statistic that Millennials are among the least religious of all American generations. According to Pew Research, one in four are unaffiliated with any religion and fewer than 15 percent see it as a priority to live “a very religious life.”²¹ That statistic adds further evidence to a self-focused worldview as more and more Millennials seem to be participating in altruistic deeds ultimately for self-satisfaction rather than for any thought of divine glory.

Another key feature in the description of Millennials is their propensity toward integrating nearly every aspect of their life with technology.²² Never before has a generation had such access to information, connectivity, global communication, and identity expression all at the touch of a button. It is a generally agreed upon fact that Millennials are well versed in technology. This is a trait that tends to permeate every sphere of life, from work to socialization, and from education to self-expression. Often Millennials can be seen performing work duties while simultaneously staying connected

¹⁸Thomas Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 2.

¹⁹Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* (New York: Atria Books, 2010), 18–19.

²⁰Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 16–18.

²¹Paul Taylor and Scott Keeter, “Millennials: Confident, Connected, Open to Change,” February 24, 2010, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>.

²²Ibid.

to friends and family through social media, texting, and other developing forms of communication, all readily available on a smartphone, tablet, or laptop.²³

Millennials are sometimes described as the most “educated” of all previous generations.²⁴ This by no means charges Millennials with being the smartest of generations, but it does speak to the continuing of a trend that began with the G.I. Generation and the normalization of high school. The trend of expanding education in every generation continued with the normalization of the pursuit of undergraduate degrees by Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers and has continued with the near normalization of the pursuit of graduate studies by Millennials. Though there is a genuine sense of academic entitlement involved in Millennial thinking about higher education,²⁵ some would argue that economic uncertainty in the job market is pushing Millennials toward more education in order to distinguish themselves from the older generations who have built up, in some cases, decades of experience in the work force. After all, Millennials are the most populous generation, but they make up only 10–15 percent of the workforce.²⁶

It is important now to make a *clear distinction between Millennials and emerging adults*. Though EA exists as a subset of the Millennial generation, *the two are not synonymous*. Another way to put it would be, all emerging adults are Millennials, but not all Millennials are emerging adults. There are shared characteristics, but Arnett makes the distinction in the following way:

Research on Millennials has focused on generational differences, contrasting today’s 18–29 year olds with other generations labeled Generation X, Baby

²³Shele Bannon, Kelly Ford, and Linda Meltzer, “Understanding Millennials in the Workplace,” *The CPA Journal* 81, no. 11 (November 2011): 61.

²⁴Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 36.

²⁵Jill Singleton-Jackson, Dennis Jackson, and Jeffrey Reinhardt, “Academic Entitlement: Exploring Definitions and Dimensions of Entitled Students,” *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 5, no. 9 (November 2011): 230.

²⁶Charles Thompson and Jane Gregory, “Managing Millennials: A Framework for Improving Attraction, Motivation, and Retention,” *The Psychologist-Manager Journal* 15, no. 4 (October 2012): 238.

Boomers, the Silent Generation, and the Greatest [G.I.] Generation. We agree that generational contrasts can be illuminating, but our focus is more on emerging adulthood as a life stage.²⁷

Arnett is clarifying the point that the study of EA is not a generational study, but rather a look at a distinct period of life. Just like childhood or old age, the new normal is that EA will be a stage through which most people will pass, even the generation beyond Millennials, assuming economic and sociological conditions persist.²⁸

In the transition to the discussion on EA, it is critical to remember that regardless of whether it is viewed as a stage of life or a generational shift, the issues faced by emerging adults considered to be unique and challenging are also able to be overcome through godly wisdom and practical truth. This study focuses on two aspects of the material. First, the demographic nature of the research which presents how vast numbers of emerging adults engage the world around them, and second, any and all practical steps offered to either indulge emerging adults in perpetuated behaviors or to assist them toward a cultural view of realized maturity. All statements are tested according to biblical wisdom with the goal of providing a concise worldview perspective of how psychologists view and treat EA, either as a phase of life to be traversed, or as a condition to be treated.

Arnett and Emerging Adulthood Research

It was necessary to provide a context for EA and its generational predecessors in order to understand the cultural, moral, and socio-economic conditions in which most emerging adults find themselves. Having looked back at the changing demographic landscape of the twentieth century, as well as the characteristics of how the change occurred, will help to shed light on the current generational life-phase context. *Emerging adulthood does not exist in a vacuum*. Smith notes that often times the adults of a current

²⁷Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "The Clark University Poll of Emerging Adults," December 2012, 1, accessed November 23, 2016, <https://www2.clarku.edu/clark-poll-emerging-adults/pdfs/clark-university-poll-emerging-adults-findings.pdf>.

²⁸Ibid., 1–2.

generation view problems with young people as “entirely *their* own problems, unrelated to the world around them.”²⁹ This however is not always the case. The extenuating circumstances that feed into some of the issues and problems faced are extrinsic to EA, while certain issues begin with ideas and preferences intrinsic to the group and perpetuate themselves to the point of needing outside perspectives for satisfactory resolution. The socio-economic influences beyond the control of the generation are those that are closely connected to past generations and their decisions that shaped the future such as changes in educational objectives, moral revolutions, recessions and depressions that fundamentally changed the way American youth think about the workforce, and an ever-changing economy based on newly developed and dynamic technological advances.³⁰

Now that it has been established that the issues faced by EA are not unrelated to the culture and generations surrounding this group, it is necessary to give a concise definition and boundaries to help the reader understand exactly who fits into this demographic subset.

Emerging Adulthood Defined

The term emerging adulthood was first coined by psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett in his 2000 article in *American Psychologist*. Arnett states, “I argue that this period, *emerging adulthood*, is neither adolescence nor young adulthood, but is theoretically and empirically distinct from them both.”³¹ He goes on to describe EA as such:

Emerging adulthood is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations. Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are

²⁹Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

³⁰Thompson and Gregory, “Managing Millennials,” 238.

³¹Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (June 2000): 469.

normative in adulthood, emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews. Emerging adulthood is a time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course.³²

Because EA has been identified by Arnett not as a unique generation, but rather as a life-phase, a concise definition of EA can be found in the characteristics that define this life-phase. Arnett states, "Most young people now spend the period from their late teens to mid-twenties not settling in to long-term adult roles but trying out different life experiences and gradually making their way toward enduring choices in love and work."³³ Arnett observed this group of teens coming of age who were born in the early years of the defined Millennial generational cycle and began noticing patterns. One of the defining characteristics recognized was the inability of emerging adults to be able to define whether or not they had reached or achieved adulthood. Nelson and Barry note on this observation: "One of the most compelling pieces of evidence that emerging adulthood is a unique period in development is the ambivalence that emerging adults have about their own status as adults."³⁴ Compelling is that the evidence shows this group to still recognize a phasing transition. In a Clark University study, students 18–21, 22–25, and 26–29 were asked if they had reached adulthood. The 18–21 group replied 63 percent no, followed with 41 percent no answered by the 22–25 group, and 30 percent no by the 26–29 group.³⁵ It is as if the group could not identify a firm shift in status, but rather a journey on which more and more adult characteristics were attained.

Christian Smith notes that there are six defining characteristics of EA that have helped to give more definite borders to where this group begins and ends. He notes,

³²Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development," 469.

³³Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: What Is It, and What Is It Good For?" *Society for Research in Child Development* 1, no. 2 (February 2007): 69.

³⁴Larry J. Nelson and Carolyn M. Barry, "Distinguishing Features of Emerging Adulthood: The Role of Self-Classification as an Adult," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 20 (2005): 243.

³⁵Arnett, "The Clark University Poll of Emerging Adults," 7.

In the last several decades, a number of macrosocial changes have combined to create a new phase in the American Life course. Six have been particularly important First . . . dramatic growth of higher education Second . . . the delay of marriage Third . . . changes in the American and global economy that undermine stable, lifelong careers and replace them instead with careers with lower security, more frequent job changes, and an ongoing need for new training and education Fourth . . . parents . . . seem increasingly willing to extend financial support to their children well into their 20s and perhaps early 30s Fifth . . . reliable technologies of birth control Finally . . . the widespread diffusion and powerful influence of the theories of poststructuralism and postmodernism in the U.S. Culture.³⁶

Important to note is the mix of both extrinsic and intrinsic defining characteristics, some linked to socio-economic conditions and some linked to shifting morality. Nevertheless, these characteristics stand in contrast to previous standards of realized adulthood. Robin and Samantha Henig note that there are five milestones that have been traditionally offered to demarcate the arrival at adulthood: completing school, leaving home permanently, achieving financial independence, marrying, and becoming a parent.³⁷ These five stand in stark contrast to the macrosocial changes noted by Smith, thus giving validity to the idea that EA is a unique life-phase and should merit attention.

Emerging Adulthood Recognized and Researched

As Arnett was first postulating his theory of development, he mentions three distinct conversation partners in his article that helped to pave the way for his EA research. First, Erik Erickson was a noted psychologist of the mid twentieth century who contributed several works to the field of human development. Two that influenced Arnett strongly were 1950's *Childhood and Society*³⁸ as well as 1968's *Identity, Youth, and Crisis*.³⁹ Notable from these two works were Erickson's contributions regarding

³⁶Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 13–16.

³⁷Robin M. Henig and Samantha Henig, *Twenty-Something: Why Do Young Adults Seem Stuck?* (New York: Hudson Street Press, 2012), 3–4.

³⁸Erik H. Erickson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993).

³⁹Erik H. Erickson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968).

adolescence and young adulthood, setting the table well for the emergence of this new demographic later. Erickson notes, “A psychosocial moratorium, then, seems to be built into the schedule of human development. Like all ‘latencies’ in man’s developmental schedules, the delay of adulthood can be prolonged and intensified to a forceful and fateful degree.”⁴⁰ Erickson’s comments show that even in the 1960s it was noted that certain stages of latency, or psychosocial moratoriums, are natural in the progression of human development, depending on societal influences and moral convention. Erickson also commented on the notion of adolescence as “the age of the final establishment of the dominant positive ego identity.”⁴¹ In EA terms, Erickson was describing meaning making and the search for individual identity in self-expression, noted as a defining characteristic of EA by Lerner.⁴²

The next influential voice mentioned by Arnett was Daniel Levinson. Levinson’s 1979 work *The Seasons of a Man’s life*, in which he outlines his findings from interviews of mid-life men. He describes the *novice phase*, an age range of 17–33 in which youth are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood while sorting out their professional, individual, and love life structures.⁴³ These interviews and their outcomes helped define for Arnett the unique epoch that seemed to be happening during these formative years. It stood as a separate developmental stage in need of further study.

The last of the three major influences mentioned by Arnett was Kenneth Keniston. Though Keniston was mostly writing about the culture war between youth and mainstream society as it related to America’s involvement in the Vietnam War, Keniston

⁴⁰Erickson, *Identity and Youth Crisis*, 242.

⁴¹Erickson, *Childhood and Society*, 265.

⁴²Richard M. Lerner, *Positive Youth Development & Spirituality* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008), viii.

⁴³Daniel Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man’s Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1978), 29, 71–90; 322–24.

made some significant statements regarding youth as (defined by Keniston as a stage between adolescence and young adulthood) a time for continued role experimentation.⁴⁴ Building on Keniston's ideas, Arnett both shifted Keniston's nomenclature from the ambiguous "youth" to a more defined and distinct period of life known as EA.⁴⁵

As Arnett's research on EA became universally recognized by academic communities of sociology and psychology, it began a wave of research that looked into the various characteristics of EA and sought to provide answers as to why this group thinks and acts the way they do. The following sections will examine larger categories of societal engagement and how emerging adults tend to behave, react, respond, and contribute in each category.

Emerging adults and education. Wuthnow states that Millennials are on the way to becoming the most educated generation in American history.⁴⁶ The reasons for that have been already been discussed, but they stand as follows: the normalization of the pursuit of higher education in each subsequent generation of the twentieth century, the need for continued pursuit of higher education in order to remain relevant in the ever-changing technology-based global economy,⁴⁷ and the EA proclivity toward identity exploration through experimenting with multiple careers and fields of interest. Though emerging adults are not always the most committed to follow through on their education,⁴⁸ it has become necessary and normative to pursue undergraduate studies as well as graduate studies, or continued vocational training in order to find and maintain a

⁴⁴Kenneth Keniston, *Youth and Dissent: The Rise of the New Opposition* (New York: Harper Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 200–5.

⁴⁵Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development," 470.

⁴⁶Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 36.

⁴⁷ Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: What Is It, and What Is It Good For?" 72.

⁴⁸Taylor and Keeter, "Millennials: Confident, Connected, Open to Change," 41–42.

career.⁴⁹ This drive for higher education is sometimes connected to the Millennial propensity toward self-focus and even an entitlement mentality. In fact, as Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt noted that there has been, “A cultural shift affecting education wherein the focus of education shifts away from the values of education and toward a more achievement awarded focus.”⁵⁰ This in fact may be true in multiple cases, but to be fair to the observed trends and macrosocial factors contributing to this life-phase, it must also be noted that fluid economic change and uncertainty are most certainly contributing to the EA mentality of continued education. Arnett states this clearly when he writes, “These days it is widely recognized that you have to have a college education in order to get a good job in American society.”⁵¹

Two other factors that must be considered when examining the EA drive for higher education are: a lack of commitment to the pursuit of a career path,⁵² and tied to that is the desire to explore various options for a career that will fulfill the need for defining the individual’s desired identity. Arnett notes about American college students, “They take a wide variety of courses . . . they try possible majors, looking for something that matches their abilities and interests, and most of them eventually make a choice they find satisfying.”⁵³ Arnett’s point is that college has become a safe haven for identity exploration, and identity is often shaped by a career choice. James Côté also recognizes this in what he calls *developmental individualization*. Though education is a priority, the institutions give freedom for the individual to explore their own development, a process

⁴⁹Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 14.

⁵⁰Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt, “Academic Entitlement,” 230.

⁵¹Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from Teens to Twenties*, 119.

⁵²Gibson explores the concept of a lack of commitment across the spectrum that trends toward normalcy in the lives of Millennials and Emerging Adults. For a more detailed study on emerging adulthood and a lack of commitment, see Barry James Gibson, “Emerging Adults and the Elusiveness of Commitment” (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 8–9.

⁵³Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from Teens to Twenties*, 139–41.

which Côté recognizes the need for substantial *identity capital*, or rather the qualities of self-understanding and self-discipline.⁵⁴ Côté does state though that he does not necessarily see this as a positive. He states,

On the surface, then, emerging adulthood looks like a positive development, with late modern societies giving adolescents and emerging adults a greater amount of choice and freedom. However, when the ideology of free choice is peeled away (cf. Furlong & Cartmel, 1997), an absence of guiding structures and norms is noticed—a situation of relative anomie that can present serious challenges to some people. Without guiding structures to give meaning to the potential choices people face, realistic and informed choices become burdensome for many young persons.⁵⁵

His charge to both emerging adults and to society is to be careful leaving EA completely to its own devices. Young adults need guidance, need wisdom from past experiences, and the idea of a prolonged *institutional moratoria* designed to give emerging adults the opportunity to make their own choices completely without any guidance is cautioned. Emerging adults have a plethora of opportunities to explore differing educational paths on their way to settling on a career. Côté gives a strong stance to the perspective that, though autonomy is the desired status of most emerging adults, it is unwise to leave them completely to their own devices.

Biblical counselors would be wise to remember this perspective when engaging in conversations with emerging adults with regard to their education choices.

Emerging adults and family relationships. The nature of the family has shifted dramatically over the twentieth century. Pop Culture recognizes this in its expression of television shows like *Modern Family*, a television program that highlights the differing dynamics of relationships in various situations observed in nuclear families,

⁵⁴Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “The Psychology of Emerging Adulthood: What Is Known, and What Remains to be Known?,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 308–9.

⁵⁵James Côté, “Emerging Adulthood as an Institutional Moratorium: Risks and Benefits to Identity Formation,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 92.

same-sex parented families, and step-families.⁵⁶ The family world of the emerging adult is not as prototypical as that of the Baby Boomer or even the Gen-Xer. This shifting view of a traditional family that occurred slowly over the course of the twentieth century, connected with a change in conventional morality and sexual ethic, has contributed to the way emerging adults view marriage, children, and the establishment of a family household.⁵⁷ This shift does not, however, adversely affect the level of relational involvement that emerging adults have with their parents. According to the Clark University poll, more than three quarters of those polled say they maintain contact with their parents in some manner at least once a week. Additionally, 60 percent of those polled claimed to have some level of financial support coming regularly from their parents.⁵⁸

When it comes to emerging adults' visions of marriage and family for themselves, the majority favor marriage at some point, while feeling they must first accomplish certain things.⁵⁹ Over 90 percent of emerging adults polled feel they need to be financially independent before they can get married.⁶⁰ At the same time, over 90 percent of women surveyed by Regnerus and Uecker acknowledged that they would like to get married someday, just perhaps not now.⁶¹ Again, this shows the trend toward the need to accomplish certain goals before getting married with marriage as an "end goal"

⁵⁶Jeremy Clyman, "The Dynamics of a 'Modern Family,'" April 11, 2010, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/reel-therapy/201004/the-dynamics-modern-family>.

⁵⁷Taylor and Keeter, "Millennials," 6–7.

⁵⁸Arnett, "The Clark University Poll of Emerging Adults," 9–11.

⁵⁹Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think about Marrying* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 172.

⁶⁰Kay Hymowitz et al., *Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage in America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 2013), 24–25, accessed November 4, 2016, <http://nationalmarriageproject.org/resources/knot-yet-the-benefits-and-costs-of-delayed-marriage-in-america/>.

⁶¹Regnerus and Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America*, 169.

prize of adulthood rather than a foundation for adulthood.⁶²

One common trend among emerging adults is to try for a plethora of sexual partners before marriage. The sample group viewed marriage as a serious commitment that they do not desire to see fail, thus they justify sexual experimentation so as to gain experience to put to use in a marriage relationship that they hope will last. Regnerus and Uecker put it this way: “The majority of young adults in America not only think they should explore different relationships, they believe it may be foolish and wrong not to.”⁶³

Emerging adults have shown an interesting approach to family values. They see the importance of maintaining strong family ties with their parents, they value the marriage relationship based on what they have witnessed from their parents’ generation, but they also adopted the looser morality of sexual exploration that developed in the three previous generations.⁶⁴ In doing so, they seek to gain experience and learn from mistakes before committing to marriage so they can avoid ruining their chances of having a successful marriage. In fact, many emerging adults have the belief that an early marriage most certainly will lead to divorce due to these circumstances.⁶⁵

Though emerging adults have given some of these reasons for delaying marriage, upon closer examination there are more complicated factors at play. Arnett notes the importance of self-expression and identity exploration throughout this life-phase and how close relationships or thoughts of marriage can be viewed as an impediment to identity discovery.⁶⁶ Regnerus and Uecker note several reasons their

⁶²Hymowitz et al., *Knot Yet*, 24–25.

⁶³Regnerus and Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America*, 171.

⁶⁴Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from Teens to Twenties*, 73–89.

⁶⁵Regnerus and Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America*, 179–82.

⁶⁶W. Andrew Collins and Manfred van Dulmen, “Friendships and Romance in Emerging Adulthood: Assessing Distinctiveness in Close Relationships,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 226–29.

survey group gave for delaying marriage including the desire to “be your own person, the desire to travel, lack of financial stability, believing the (especially early) twenties is too young of an age to have children, the desire to discover ideal sexual chemistry, and often parental advice to delay.”⁶⁷

Whatever the individual reasons may be, it is important for biblical counselors to note these responses from emerging adults so as to be able to provide biblical wisdom to counter the conventional wisdom of the age. Not all emerging adults have bad motives or wrong intentions for delaying marriage, but oftentimes their worldview is shaped by these motives that are pervasive in the world around them. Biblical insights and wisdom regarding these issues will be explored in later chapters.

Emerging adults, the economy, and the workplace. The economy and the workplace have shifted dramatically recent years, becoming one of the largest contributing factors that has shaped the statistical patterns of the twentieth century. This truth has already been explored in the study of the G.I. Generation, Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers, and now Millennials (thus, the subset of emerging adults). The Great Depression changed the workforce, causing the normalization of high school to keep boys who would have been working off the streets. Boomers faced the revitalization of America and the need for college educated minds in the fields of business, thus normalizing higher education and shifting the requirements for participation in the workforce. Gen-Xers and Millennials have witnessed the economy switch to primarily a technology based economy and work environment, a shift that has therefore bred the need for graduate level education and advanced field training.

The other side effect of this switch is the unstable nature of careers, with many shifting jobs or careers multiple times.⁶⁸ This propensity toward job hopping could also

⁶⁷Regnerus and Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America*, 182–92.

⁶⁸Taylor and Keeter, “Millennials,” 46.

be seen as a lack of commitment,⁶⁹ or as a reflection of the desire for identity exploration as previously demonstrated motivations for emerging adults.⁷⁰ Contrary to past generations who saw opportunities to join the workforce, do a duty, or earn a paycheck, whereas the mentality of the emerging adult tends to see commitment to a career as a personal reflection of who they are as an individual, thus it is far more than a simple duty, rather it is a very personal decision.⁷¹

It is important to see the different factors for why emerging adults have the tendency to switch jobs, change careers, or seem non-committal in their work life. Though sometimes a characteristic commitment issue is the problem, often it is merely a reflection of the reality of the fluid economy and job market. Biblical counselors must be careful not to automatically characterize the condition, but rather to understand every contributing factor as to why career choices, changes, and decisions are made.

Emerging adults, religion, and spirituality. Similar to how emerging adults and Millennials are quickly becoming the most educated generation, they are also quickly becoming the least religiously engaged generation in American History. Taylor and Keeter note that only 18 percent of Millennials (and fewer emerging adults) attend religious services on a weekly basis, noting that Millennials are about half as affiliated with religion as the two previous generations.⁷² Understanding the characteristics of narcissism and self-focus common to Millennials (many of whom demonstrate some or all of the characteristic traits of EA), this trend can be expected. Most of these young

⁶⁹Gibson, "Emerging Adults and the Elusiveness of Commitment," 24–25.

⁷⁰Jeffrey J. Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: Understanding the New Way of Coming of Age," in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 7.

⁷¹Tiffany Gallicano, Patricia Curtin, and Kelli Matthews, "I Love What I Do, But . . . A Relationship Management Survey of Millennial Generation Public Relations Agency Employees," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 24, no. 3 (June 2012): 235.

⁷²Taylor and Keeter, "Millennials," 85.

people are looking for meaning and identity through self-expression and spirituality that conforms to user experience and something that is worth adopting as part of the individual's identity.⁷³ Many see organized religion as wooden, unchanging, irrelevant, and focused at conforming the individual to a set of rules and ideals rather than providing meaning for the individual, thus they see church as irrelevant to achieving their end goals.⁷⁴

Though organized religion is not as conventional in EA, that is not to say there is a lack of morality or of spirituality. Several volumes of works have been written to address the issues of spiritual formation in emerging adults, particularly as it relates to identity and individual self-expression. Smith notes, "Moral rights and wrongs are [or, have become] essentially matters of individual opinion. . . . The general approach associated with this outlook is not to judge anyone else on moral matters, since they are entitled to their own personal opinions."⁷⁵ More will be explored regarding cultural postmodern influence on morality in the following section, specifically as it relates to anti-realism, relativism, and subjectivism, but it is important to note that the characteristic ideals of EA present a world in preference of moral relativism rather than allowing institutions to impose moral standards.⁷⁶

Christian Smith provides six general categories that describe the typical religious status' of emerging adults. First are *Committed Traditionalists*. These are EA who personalize faith, identify with religious traditions, and whose active participation is

⁷³Robert W. Roeser et al., "Self and Identity Processes in Spirituality and Positive Youth Development," in *Positive Youth Development & Spirituality: From Theory to Research*, ed. Richard M. Lerner, Robert W. Roeser, and Erin Phelps (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation press, 2008), 74–95.

⁷⁴Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 244.

⁷⁵Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 21.

⁷⁶Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona Abo-Zena, "Emerging Adults' Religious and Spiritual Development," in *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality*, ed. Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona Abo-Zena (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 24–25.

a large part of their identity. Second are the *Selective Adherents*. This group sees value in certain traditions, but choose to ignore those that cause cognitive dissonance in their operative worldview. Third are the *Spiritually Open*. Some may call these “seekers,” but they are generally non-committed but searching for religious meaning in their identity. Fourth are the *Religiously Indifferent*. These people are ambivalent to religion or spirituality. They are not openly for or against the promotion of religious ideals. Fifth are the *Religiously Disconnected*. Faith has never played a significant role in the lives of this group. They stand disconnected and fairly unreached by organized religion. Lastly, the *Irreligious*. This group is often openly skeptical or even hostile to the thought of organized religion, particularly when it imposes morality or judgment on others. Typically they will tolerate religious beliefs as long as they are kept private.⁷⁷

Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton also introduced the term Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (henceforth MTD). Smith and Denton attribute MTD with the following beliefs: (1) A god exists who created and ordered the world and who watches over human life on earth. (2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. (3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. (4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. (5) Good people go to heaven when they die. Albert Mohler says of this system, “That, in sum, is the creed to which much adolescent faith can be reduced.”⁷⁸ Mohler continues by stating that this study indicates that much of American youth (EA) is heavily influenced by individualistic ideology, reflexive non-judgmental attitudes for matters of theological convictions, and the subjectivist belief that there are no objectively right answers, but

⁷⁷Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 166–68.

⁷⁸R. Albert Mohler, “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: The New American Religion,” April 18, 2005, Christian Post, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion-6266/>.

rather truth is relative.⁷⁹

Kenda Creasy Dean has done exceptional research on this very topic. She recognizes a massive decline in personal faith that has been replaced with a loveless disconnected version. She writes,

Christian formation invites young people into this motley band of pilgrims and prepares them to receive the Spirit who calls them, shapes them, and enlists them in God's plan to right a capsized world. Teenagers with consequential Christian faith share a profound and personal sense of God's love and forgiveness on this journey. . . . But such a consequential faith—faith that grows by confessing a creed, belonging to a community, and pursuing purpose and hope—is not the faith that most American teenagers seem to have.⁸⁰

She continues in her description of this common faith system,

Instead, churches seem to have offered teenagers a kind of 'diner theology': a bargain religion, cheap but satisfying, whose gods require little in the way of fidelity and sacrifice. . . . There are inspiring exceptions, of course, but for the most part we have traded the kind of faith confessed and embodied in the church's most long-standing traditions for the savory stew of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. And, for the most part, young people have followed suit.⁸¹

Emerging adults are facing a serious crisis of faith and religion. With MTD as the pervasive and dominant view of religion among EA, there can be no guideposts or absolute truth spoken into a situation, issue, or problem that can offer wise solutions. Biblical counselors must understand this presupposition. They must go into conversations and relationships with emerging adults with the knowledge that MTD is the predominant religious worldview of this demographic. Biblical counselors must speak into the lives of emerging adults in a loving way, firmly rooted in the unchanging truth of Scripture. Dean describes this as *conversational faith*. She writes, "It comes as no surprise that families and communities that encourage practices in which teenagers must put religious convictions and experiences into words are more likely to have highly devoted

⁷⁹Mohler, "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."

⁸⁰Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the America Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 10.

teenagers.”⁸² She further describes the necessity to talk about God, talk about His word, and to spend time together in prayer and other spiritual activities.⁸³ This will most likely be shocking to the EA system, but it is a necessary step toward bringing them around to a proper theology of truth, an understanding of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, and the nature of God’s design for faith and religion. It also reinforces the purpose and need of biblical counseling: a discipleship conversation that leads to sanctified change.

Emerging adults and a relativistic worldview. As alluded to in previous sections, relativism (an aspect of postmodernism) has permeated every segment of the worldview framework common to emerging adults. Smith notes, though, a strange dichotomy as many emerging adults seem to recognize some pre-modern construct of natural law or of independent morality.⁸⁴ He notes that many youth speak about moral knowledge as being instinctive or intuitive. Christians would of course identify this as the recognition of the conscience, but a relativistic society teaches that these are merely societal conventions of morality, and that if the individual who recognizes such things were to have grown up in a different culture, society, or time period, their innate sense of morality would have a different construct.⁸⁵ As West states, “Openness and acceptance on every and any level—from personal to national, from sexual to religious—are the highest possible virtues of the postmodern Westerner.”⁸⁶ This matches up quite harmoniously with the open morality of EA in general, preferring to set an individual moral code, not enforce it on anyone else, and be tolerant (i.e., open and accepting) of the moral stances held by others.

⁸²Dean, *Almost Christian*, 135.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 55–56.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Diane West, *The Death of the Grown-Up: How America’s Arrested Development Is Bringing Down Western Civilization* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), 131.

However, this does not negate the fact that a noticeable segment of EA feels the tug of their conscience. They cannot reconcile relative morality and the inherent sense of right and wrong screaming at them from inside. Biblical counselors have a great opportunity to capitalize on the truth from Romans 1:18; 2:14–15; 8:16, Psalm 16:7, Ephesians 1:17 and a myriad of other passages that refer to the conscience, Spirit-to-spirit instruction from God, and absolute morality grounded in the heart of man. Relative morality is a frustrating hurdle, but the law of God written on the hearts of men is a louder and clearer truth that speaks directly to the suffering soul of the emerging adult.

Emerging Adulthood, Psychology, and Psychotherapies

The previous section laid the foundation of research findings and characteristics of EA as developed by Arnett, Smith, Barry, Cote, Lerner, and others over the past two decades. The links to socio-economic development in previous generations helped to set the stage for how and why Millennials think the way they do, particularly with regard to the generational cycles and pendulum swings in thought and action as noted by Strauss and Howe.⁸⁷ Emerging adulthood does not exist in a vacuum, nor is it entirely unique from previous generations. However, the unique combination of pre-generational influences, socio-economic changes throughout the twentieth century, and certain philosophical influences of postmodernism have culminated in a unique dynamic for EA that continues to merit scholarly attention.⁸⁸

The following sections will look at the corpus of writing dedicated specifically to analyzing and understanding worldview positions of emerging adults. These works catalog and codify that information into recognizable categories, then share it with the socio-psychological community at large.

⁸⁷Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 56–57.

⁸⁸Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development,” 479.

Emerging Adulthood Recognized by Psychology

When Jeffrey Arnett first postulated his emerging adulthood theory of development in 2000, he noted that several characteristics deemed it worthy to be recognized as a unique and distinct phase of human development in need of further study. Many followed his lead and began contributing almost immediately to the newly forming corpus of writing that would help to give a clarified vision for the characteristics of emerging adults and this newly recognized developmental phase.

Initially, this research focused on describing the phenomenon. However, even in the simple act of recognition, worldviews are imposed and dual purposes are exposed.⁸⁹ Regardless of the stance of neutrality, a researcher always comes to a study or conclusion with presuppositions, and those presuppositions are the lens through which any situation is viewed. In this case, developmental psychology views EA as a beneficial phase of life for youth in Western societies.⁹⁰ The recognition of this developmental phase helped this community to both understand and grasp the reasons behind certain patterns of behavior and common traits among post-adolescent youth in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.⁹¹

Arnett noted the common traits found among people in this life stage as *identity explorations*, *instability* (in decisions, finances, careers, relationships, etc., Arnett was not referring to mental instability), *self-focus*, the feeling of being *in-between*, and

⁸⁹Arnett's initial purpose in writing "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties." *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 469–80 was to get the community surrounding developmental psychology to recognize Emerging Adulthood by its distinct characteristics. However, in doing so, he also exposed his secular worldview in not only condoning this developmental phase as both necessary and good, but also in showing hope that certain societies that do not provide such opportunities, for whatever socio-economic reasons, will eventually come around to allow such an "important" phase of "personal freedom and exploration" (479). Though there is no prescriptive element built into the construct, there is a condoning aspect that both recognizes and affirms this developmental phase. In that affirmation, certain characteristics of behavior and lifestyle are permissioned on the clinical level, thus leading to their perpetuation. More will be discussed on this aspect of EA in the next section.

⁹⁰Ibid., 479.

⁹¹Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: What Is It?," 68–69.

the feeling of *possibilities*.⁹² He also states on the same page that by the time this article was published, the term EA had become commonplace among psychologists and sociologists, thus normalizing the idea and calling for further advancement in research of EA traits and tendencies. Interestingly as well, he writes that most outside observers (those of past generations)—at least early on—viewed this transition or developmental phase in a negative and even pejorative way, while most emerging adults took a very positive outlook on this time in life.⁹³ Many of the outside critics viewed individuals characterized by these traits as suffering through a sort of “Quarter-life crisis,” but Arnett wanted to show that even though there are semblances of disarray and some mild aspects of crisis occurring they were, for the most part, good. In a sense, the difficult choices and struggles were like a fiery crucible, serving as a rite of passage to help the emerging adult arrive on the other side of this developmental transition as a full-fledged adult.⁹⁴

Throughout the development of his theory, Arnett has shown a desire to understand what factors led to the behavioral patterns of EA and how society could recognize those factors, understand the situation, and help accommodate emerging adults as they traverse this phase. In doing so, a large portion of a generation has passed through (or is passing through) EA with a greater understanding of the issues they face, as well as with a greater sense of accommodation by the society around them. Society at-large set aside, the question begged for biblical counselors is: Are these accommodations serving the emerging adult in the church in a biblical way? Or in a perpetuated mode of self-focus? Those questions will be explored and answered later.

⁹²Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: What Is It?,” 69.

⁹³Ibid., 70.

⁹⁴Ibid., 71–72.

Emerging Adulthood Researched, Developed, and Expanded

Arnett's initial articles gave way for a massive corpus of writing and research to develop regarding this newly recognized life-phase. The desire to explore and understand EA has provided insights into the spiritual practices of EA, relational habits, trends in workplace behaviors, searches for meaning and identity, patterns of sexual behavior, and various other cultural transitional contexts.

Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona Abo-Zena compiled a collection of fifteen essays relating to EA and spiritual formation entitled *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality*. They begin by exploring the factors that contribute to the development of spiritual identity, ultimately recognizing the fluidity of context-related factors including parents, schooling, peers, religious communities, media exposure, sexual preference, and other factors.⁹⁵ The work continues with peer-contributed essays relating to these and other categories. Piotr S. Bobkowski makes an interesting contribution as he discusses the nature of religious media as an accessible medium for creating individual religious identity.⁹⁶ Implied in his essay is the relativistic notion that morality, religion, and spirituality are inherently personal to the individual and do not necessarily need to conform to anything external from the one who builds the construct. The position presented is that this is the normal habit of meaning-driven emerging adults who are looking to develop their own spirituality. With MTD as a foundational worldview, media-driven religious mediums become the mode by which emerging adults pick and choose religious motifs in order to build a *mosaic* construct that suits their desires.

Another essay from this work focuses on the nature of meaning-making as it

⁹⁵Barry and Abo-Zena, "Emerging Adults' Religious and Spiritual Development," 7–14.

⁹⁶Piotr S. Bobkowski, "Faith in the Digital Age: Emerging Adults' Religious Mosaics and Media Practices," in *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning Making in the Age of Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 93–105.

relates to an individual's cultural and social context. Abo-Zena and Ahmed postulate that religion is inextricably linked to cultural background and societal pressures.⁹⁷ Interesting to note is that these authors both come from a culturally Muslim background, though they recognize the Western notion of individualized religious meaning derived from elements of culture, family, religious background, education, peer influence, and personal preference.⁹⁸ They also note the prevalence of the MTD religious worldview as a major influence over the general spiritual direction of EA.

Most of the essays in this compilation focus on the observation of trends and habits of EA in various contexts that contribute to religious identity and spiritual formation. However, like Arnett, most of these authors carry with them a person-centered worldview that recognizes and even promotes a self-focus in the fulfillment of spiritual formation. In this line of thought, there is no absolute truth or authority to govern the religious behaviors of EA. Subjectivism and relativism prevail once more.

Another pivotal collection of essays that deal with EA and spiritual formation is the collection edited by Richard M. Lerner, Robert W. Roeser, and Erin Phelps, entitled *Positive Youth Development & Spirituality*. The work divides essays into categories of conceptual issues, biological contributions, individual preferences, and social and cultural contexts that all contribute to the notion of EA spirituality.⁹⁹ The overall sense that one might gain from reading these essays is that there is no singular

⁹⁷Mona M. Abo-Zena and Sameera Ahmed, "Religion, Spirituality, and Emerging Adults: Processing Meaning through Culture, Context, and Social Position," in *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning Making in the Age of Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 220–21.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 223–31.

⁹⁹Individual essays will not be cited; however, the general direction of this work flows out of a person-centered, MTD-based worldview that allows for individual autonomy from God or from society in the spiritual formations, preferences, and practices of emerging adults. The categories mentioned above serve to show that every area of life is open to the interpretation of the one living it, and spiritual formation is completely subjective to the individual's preferences for their religious construct (or absence of one). Contributing factors may play a role, but it is up to the individual to see how those factors will be incorporated into his or her spirituality; they are ultimately not determinative, though they are influential.

authority when it comes to religion or spiritual development in the Millennial generation, specifically relating to EA. The subjective, relativistic, MTD worldview precludes any notion of authoritative truth or divine directive.

Further development showed not only the (culturally) positive aspects of EA, but also the negative. Christian Smith spent much of his research looking at the darker side of EA. Smith recognized that MTD and postmodernism (specifically as it relates to anti-realism, relativism, and subjectivism) bring confusion and uncertainty, and he noted that a free morality can often lead to unexpected moral dilemmas that are not easily solved in this construct.¹⁰⁰ He also wrote of the liberated sexuality of EA saying, “Not far beneath the surface appearance of happy, liberated emerging adult sexual adventure and pleasure lies a world of hurt, insecurity, confusion, inequality, shame, and regret.”¹⁰¹ The wisdom in this quote speaks to the common grace of God showing the folly of human pursuits of happiness. Smith notes here that a liberated sexual morality is not a source of true happiness. The cognitive dissonance of postmodern views of relative morality and subjectivism preaches the absence of absolute truth, while the conscience demands recognition of the opposite.

Additionally, Diana West writes in her book *The Death of the Grown-Up: How America's Arrested Development Is Bringing Down Western Civilization* about the nature of this generation's characteristic indecision, perpetual (at least perceived by West) immaturity, and how the slowed progression toward adulthood is actually breaking down the fabric of American culture, or at least fundamentally changing it. West notes the juvenilization of the mainstream as being countercultural and destructive, saying, “This mainstreaming of countercultural behavior is probably the most significant marker of our own stretch of civilization. To be sure, the ebb and flow of decadence run through the

¹⁰⁰Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 56–59.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 193.

ages, but it is only in our own time that it washes over us all like some giant fountain of youth that is not only hard to resist, but impossible to avoid.”¹⁰² Her point is that the normalization of unconventional behavior is actually bringing our structured society to a breaking point. This breaking point is not only a reaction by EA to the world around them, but a proactive response in decisions toward autonomy, self-focus, and the delay of “adult” family responsibilities (i.e., child raising, bread winning, etc.). Regarding young adult development she states, “It appears, at first glance, the notion of producing grown-ups in their early twenties is, for the most part, lost in antiquity.”¹⁰³ This sad testament to what is being witnessed in society also translates into decisions, preferences, and attitudes toward the church and masculine responsibilities in emerging adults who claim Christ. Characteristic of the culture around them, these EA Christians bring their worldview with them into the church on Sundays. This is something the biblical counselor should carefully note.

A good conclusion to this survey of expanded research and literature developing various aspects of study on EA is the compilation of essays called *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*. This collection focuses less on spiritual formation and more on structures of thought in EA, identity exploration, critical markers and turning points in human development, family and friendship relationships, and the normalization of sex as part of identity formation and preparation for adulthood and the marriage relationship.¹⁰⁴ Many researchers contribute various points of view on characteristics of EA, however all of their worldview perspectives are the same. When it comes to identity exploration, the search for meaning in significant life events, religious

¹⁰²West, *The Death of the Grown-Up*, 11.

¹⁰³Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁴Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner, preface to *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006.), xvii–xxi.

and spiritual formation, sexual expression, family, and career decisions most of the research points to the importance of self-fulfillment, finding ways to maximize personal satisfaction, and personalizing truth picked up along the way.¹⁰⁵

A good digest of the entire collection comes in the final essay where Arnett offers summary statements to the reading audience based on what they have encountered. Arnett recounts that Tanner had previously discussed two key processes in EA: *recentering* and *ego development*. *Recentering* is the process of moving toward what Tanner refers to as *system commitments*, or of the move from dependence on parents toward making long-term commitments to obligations such as careers and family. *Ego Development* is described as the process of constructing life plans centered around various possibilities that have been explored and chosen during EA.¹⁰⁶ No longer is the process seen as transitional, as in previous generations (where it was normal for example to finish college, choose a career, buy a home, and get married within a relatively short time), but as a long process of discovery and the narrowing down of preference through experimentation that eventually leads to decision-making.¹⁰⁷

These selected works represent both the inner and outer core of research put toward EA as a developmental stage of life. Most of the research presented is observed, recorded, found through surveys of emerging adults, and is presented in a way that explains the characteristics of this dynamic cultural subset. Though it is not the goal of this thesis to serve as a polemic against psychology or as a critique of the material

¹⁰⁵This statement comes from a digestion of all of the pertinent material found in the essays of this book. Though a generalization, the importance of distinguishing the purpose and worldview behind what was written, as opposed to explaining what was written, is most critical for this study. The Biblical Counselor must be aware of presuppositions and pre-conditioning in the minds of Emerging Adults as they enter into counseling relationships with these individuals in order to have a proper background profile of the worldview and system in which emerging adults exist.

¹⁰⁶Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "The Psychology of Emerging Adulthood: What Is Known, and What Remains to be Known?," in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 304–5.

¹⁰⁷Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: Understanding the New Way of Coming of Age," 7–14.

findings of these authors, questions must be asked as to whether or not the findings are presented in a way that validates EA as a lifestyle to which the (roughly) 18–29-year-old person is bound. The following section will ask the question of whether or not the data is purely observation or if those digesting and disseminating the material down to emerging adults through counseling or any other form of relational conversation are giving license to emerging adults to perpetuate certain behavioral characteristics by showing documented research that validates it as normative.

Pure Observation? Or Veiled License?

The information presented in this chapter has elucidated the groundwork for both the core of research and the worldview perspectives that define EA and emerging adults' approach to their formative post-adolescent years. Several prominent writers, professors, and researchers were represented in their writings and views toward understanding EA and how to engage in dialogue with emerging adults.

The question that needs to be asked is whether or not scholarly research which recognizes trends and applies worldview criteria to explain behavioral patterns validates and lends credibility to the continuation and even perpetuation of those patterns. It is important to note Côté's observation regarding *identity capital* and *developmental individualization* with regard to this question. As he observed, when emerging adults are presented with a free choice with little or no institutional guidance, they often lack the *identity capital* (self-discipline and self-understanding) to properly think through the consequences of a decision.¹⁰⁸ The problem lies in the fact that there is *no* lack of professional reference regarding lifestyle choices of emerging adulthood. Students looking to validate their actions, behavior, or life choices need only look to the experts on the subject to gather fodder for their arguments in order to support their choices. Further,

¹⁰⁸Côté, "Emerging Adulthood as an Institutional Moratorium," 92.

the inclination toward confirmation-bias seems a common phenomenon when seeking to validate one's own worldview, and when there is a large chorus of professional voices preaching the normalcy of behavioral patterns, there is a danger in those voices offering a perceived approval of the individual's choice, which could ultimately be seen as perpetuation of the behavior.

Côté in fact has become somewhat of an outspoken opponent to the idea that emerging adulthood is a universally good idea. After the publication of *Generation on Hold: Coming of Age in the Late 20th Century*, which argued for similar sociological reasoning to EA, he noted in an article published in *Applied Developmental Science*, "In the twenty years since the publication of that book the situation has become more deleterious for a greater proportion of the youth population . . . prompting me here to identify a 'dangerous myth' that covers up the causes and consequences of these young people's disadvantages."¹⁰⁹ Additionally, he accuses the psychological community of pressing the emerging adulthood nomenclature to the point that the culture has accepted it as standardized truth. In the accusation of a cultural phenomenon of confirmation-bias concerning the characteristics of emerging adulthood, Côté writes, "By normalizing the degraded status of young people in the political economy that has taken hold since the 1980s . . . models such as Arnett's aggravate the precarious education-to-work transition by 'advocating' emerging adulthood to the public."¹¹⁰ Furthermore, he states in his conclusion, "His formulation not only muddies the waters, but it has potentially dangerous consequences for many young people."¹¹¹ The dangers he is referring to are the consequences of accepting markers of EA and having those markers perpetuate themselves rather than resolve in a cultural equilibrium.

¹⁰⁹James Côté, "The Dangerous Myth of Emerging Adulthood: An Evidence-Based Critique of a Flawed Developmental Theory," *Applied Developmental Science* 18, no. 4 (October, 2014): 180.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 186.

¹¹¹Ibid.

West's closing arguments in *The Death of the Grown-Up* affirm Côté's point of view here in stating from the positive, "A clear moral standard would serve to anchor a clear cultural standard . . . [we] as individuals need to reimpose boundaries on personal behavior."¹¹² Based on this and Côté's perspectives, it is fair to say that emerging adulthood and the EA model, though functional, has not proven to be persuasive as a positive influence on culture across the board. These and other voices have sounded alarm over the resulting consequences of affirmation and perpetuation of recognized behavioral patterns and the normalization of those behaviors.

The opportunity for biblical counselors is to see the disharmony in the resulting effects of those emerging adults who are indulging in the various descriptive categories of behavior over which they have control (i.e., sexual freedom, lack of commitment to family or career decisions, etc.). While it is important to recognize extrinsic factors, it is also important to differentiate between which factors can be controlled versus which cannot, while offering biblical wisdom toward solutions for masculine maturity in the context of the home, the church, and the culture in which they exist.

Wisdom for Biblical Counselors before Engaging Emerging Adults

The opportunity is ripe for biblical counselors to engage the young adult culture in the church. Armed with the information provided above, one can more readily step into a discipleship relationship or a counseling situation with a young member of the church who exhibits the characteristics described as emerging adulthood. A clear understanding of how the culture defines certain sociological categories and traits will help to set a framework for discussion and provide relatively accurate general background. The importance of this opportunity and this need cannot be overstated. Dunn

¹¹²West, *The Death of the Grown-Up*, 216–17.

and Sundene state it this way, “Shaping the next generation through discipling remains by far the most powerful strategy Christ has given to us for shaping the church”¹¹³ Though some define it differently, biblical counseling has been described as “targeted discipleship.”¹¹⁴ With these thoughts in mind, the biblical counselor can seize the opportunity as a mandate from Christ to seek out relationships with emerging adults (for this context, young men) in the church for the purpose of re-shaping their identity to be centered on their relationship with Christ. In re-orienting their perspective with grounded biblical truth, each and every pitfall that besets them in their world can be avoided or overcome. Beginning with a biblical framework, biblical counselors can root them in truth and help them to fix their eyes on Christ and on His will. The mandates for masculine maturity can then begin to take hold and alter the trajectory of their spiritual formation.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed approach to understanding how to address each unique characteristic of EA from a biblical perspective. As stated previously, some of the contributing factors that set the stage for EA are circumstances that cannot be avoided (i.e., the economy, the job market, etc.). Others, such as the avoidance of adult responsibilities, worldly morality, lack of commitment to church, work, or school, and others are matters of personal choice. Each factor will be looked at from a biblical perspective to construct a paradigm for counseling emerging adults both in a formal counseling setting as well as through relational discipleship.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a history of the cultural trends of the twentieth

¹¹³Richard R. Dunn and Jana L. Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 21.

¹¹⁴John Street, “Pastoral Counseling—What is Counseling?” (lecture, The Masters Seminary, Sun Valley, CA, 2014).

century, beginning with the G.I. (or Great) Generation, the Baby Boomer Generation, Gen-X, and Millennials in order to set the framework for understanding the cultural constructs that help to define emerging adulthood. This study has demonstrated that certain extrinsic factors such as dynamic shifts in the approach of education, the normalization of high school and university education in lieu of entering the workforce directly after adolescence, the proliferation of a liberated sexual morality, and the destabilization of the economy and the job market have set the stage for the phenomena that are being witnessed in emerging adulthood. This chapter has also shown that certain traits of EA are intrinsic and characteristic of an overarching subjectivist and relativist morality and a culture that embraces MTD as a foundation for religion and spiritual formation. Both categories are necessary to understand and to address in discipleship and biblical counseling situations.

The following chapters will follow a process of exegesis and analysis of key Old Testament and New Testament texts that are relevant to building a biblical theology of masculinity. These chapters will establish a framework of biblical wisdom that will be applied as the foundation for the biblical counseling paradigm presented in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3
EXEGESIS OF SELECT OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS
RELEVANT FOR GODLY MASCULINITY

This chapter will examine a selection of Old Testament texts that are relevant to the understanding of a biblical theology of masculinity in its mandate and practice. The passages selected have been chosen to build a comprehensive picture of what the Bible teaches directly related to the issues faced by emerging adults, specifically in the areas where, in the previous chapter it was shown, they are at odds with examples and instruction from God’s word.

Examination of each text will include a study of background and context, exegetical commentary, theological explanation and significance, and a conclusion pointing to why this text is relevant to the discussion. The texts will be presented in the order they are found in Scripture. For the best possible interpretation of the theological implications of these texts, Scripture presumes a literal grammatico-historical, or syntactical-theological hermeneutic approach to interpretation.¹

The Functional Man of Genesis 2:15–18, 23–24

In the creation account of Genesis 1–2, Moses records for God’s people the history of how God created the world. Boice notes, “Genesis is important because it gives us our origins—not merely the origins of one particular family, but the origins of matter, life, values, evil, grace, the family, nations, and other things.”² With that as the

¹For a detailed study on why this approach is deemed the best and most accurate method of interpretation, see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Meaning of Meaning,” in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, ed. Walter C Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 27–45.

²James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), 15.

foundational understanding, it is important to establish the background and context of this passage since biblical truth does not exist in a vacuum. It must be presented in the original context and remain faithful to authorial intent.

When it comes to the interpretation of narrative text, Kaiser writes,

The most common genre in the Bible is narrative . . . in its broadest sense [it] is an account of specific space-time events . . . [in interpreting narrative texts] readers too often project some moral or spiritual truth Under this method of handling the text, each narrative seems to be cut off from the redemptive history of Christ and results in a severe fragmentation of the message of the Bible.³

The purpose in presenting that statement from Kaiser is to show that the narrative genre is common and is also commonly misinterpreted, looking often for a moralistic or exemplary interpretation of an event, characteristic, or moral rather than looking at the overall purpose of the text. However, to remain true to the purpose and flow of redemptive history, this narrative will be viewed in its context in order to extrapolate the theological significance for the redemptive purposes of man, his role in creation, moral code, and God's view of the individual as being incomplete and in need of relational support.

Background and Context

A conservative and literal approach to the interpretation of Genesis leads to the understanding that Moses penned the history of creation and of the pre-captive history of Israel God dictated it to him (and from any extant sources available to him) at Sinai, after the exodus from Egypt.⁴

The word *Genesis* literally means “beginnings.” The material presented in Genesis provides mankind not only with material origins, but also with the origins of

³Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “I Will Remember the Deeds of the LORD,” in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, ed. Walter C Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 69–70.

⁴H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 5–13.

divine law, mandate, and purposes for man in God's created order.⁵ The importance of a literal interpretation (i.e., author's intended purpose and original meaning, not "wooden" literal), for the sake of theology, cannot be overstated. Genesis provides every Christian the foundations of biblical and systematic theologies. Thus, biblical counselors must understand, from Genesis, the mandate that God has for mankind and his interaction with the world around him, including the relational dynamics of marriage and family.

In this section of the narrative, God begins to describe three elements of mankind's existence under his rule. First is the mandate to be a worker in his designed role. Second is to be an obedient subject of God's rule. Third, God declares that it is not good for man to be alone; his ideal state is to exist in union with a partner.

Exegesis

The thought behind the selection of these particular texts is that they speak directly to the conversation in regards to God-given roles as both worker and as head of the family, and to establish the fact that God has indeed established a code of moral law that is absolute.

Genesis 2:15. "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden to work it and keep it."⁶

This verse gives the mandate for man as a worker in God's creation. The verbal action taken by the "LORD" God in this verse is twofold: first, *laqach* (all Hebrew words are from the *BHS* and are alliterated into English for ease of reading) refers to the action of "taking in the hand or by the hand"⁷ with the express purpose of giving direction. The second action is *nuach*, that God put, placed, or rested for the purpose of

⁵Boice, *Genesis*, 15.

⁶All references of Scripture are taken from the English Standard Version.

⁷Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1906; repr., Peabody, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2012), 542–44.

remaining somewhere, which the text says is the garden.⁸ The verbal drive shows that God led man by the hand to the garden and placed him there to remain. The verse continues with a purpose clause describing the man. Designated by the *lamed* preposition and the infinitive construct⁹ forms of *ahvad*, implying to work on behalf of another as a laborer,¹⁰ and *shamar*, meaning to work and, to keep, to entrust a property, to have charge of, and to guard, the implication is the continuation of that action as a characteristic of the man's life.¹¹

The exegetical summary of this verse can be stated as follows: In this section of the narrative, God takes man by the hand and guides him into the garden of Eden, purposing for him to reside there permanently. He did so for the purpose of having man serve as his land steward, caring for and working in the garden as his designated vocation.

Genesis 2:16–17. “And the LORD God commanded the man saying, ‘You may surely eat of any tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

These verses speak to the subjection of man under God's authoritative rule. The verbal emphasis in this verse is in the command of God. *Tzawah* implies “laying a charge upon,” or “issuing a direct command.”¹² Similar uses of this root echo the idea of a resounding cry. The implication is that of a strong, resounding, clear, and unambiguous command. Following this, God offers a permission and a restriction to the man. First, he

⁸Ibid., 628–29.

⁹Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 111.

¹⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 712–14.

¹¹William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 377–78.

¹²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 845–46.

states, “You may surely eat of any tree in the garden.” The emphasis is placed in the prepositive intensive cognate infinitive absolute of *achal*. Whenever this construction occurs in Hebrew, it intensifies the meaning of the verb and gives it an intensified, strengthened, and emphatic sense.¹³ Interestingly, the following clause forbids and restricts access to eating the fruit of a singular tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The way this passage is constructed, the Hebrew states a permanent and emphatic negation in the *lo* (not, never) and the imperfect verb,¹⁴ instructing Adam that this was a permanent law. Coupled with this permanent negation is another occurrence of the prepositive intensive cognate infinitive absolute in the form of *muth*, or death. God was assuring Adam that the consequences of breaking this permanent law would be an immediate sentence of death.

In summary, God’s law was established for Adam in that he was given open and emphatic permission to enjoy the blessings of all the trees in the Garden of Eden with the exception of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God restricted his access to that tree by issuing a command permanently prohibiting its consumption, and promising that death was a certainty if he were to break that law. The fulfillment of that emphatic promise of death was fulfilled not only in Adam’s own mortality, but also in the introduction of death to all mankind through the fall (Rom 5:12).

Genesis 2:18. “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for him.’” Continuing in the narrative is the move to God’s recognition of man’s ideal state as being one in partnership with a woman. There are two major implications to take away from this verse: First, God Himself, for the first time in

¹³William D. Barrick and Irvin A. Busenitz, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Sun Valley, CA: Grace Books International, 2011), 126–27.

¹⁴Frederick Clark Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert: A Student’s Guide to the Syntax of Biblical Hebrew* (Quakertown, PA: Stylus, 2002), 36.

recorded history, notes that something is not good. Up until this point in Genesis, every stage of creation was declared to be good, but when God saw that man was alone, He stated it was not good. Moses does not use the *lo* and imperfect verb permanent negation construct here, so God is not saying it is “never good” for man to be alone, but rather that God’s ideal design is for man to have a suitable helper, designed as a complement to him.¹⁵

To summarize, this verse offers an observation of a problem and a cure. God notices the one “not good” thing in his creation, that it is not good for man to be alone. The solution that he comes up with is to create a suitable helper who is designed to complement and fulfill the man where he is lacking. A good reminder to all men is that God may have created the woman to be the helper, but he created man needing the help!¹⁶

Genesis 2:24. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The *al-cain*, translated as “for this reason” or sometimes as “therefore,” serves as a conjunctive adjective joining the previous clause to the following clause, linking the two in significance and meaning. Moses is saying that what follows is the purpose of why God desired to create a suitable partner for man.¹⁷ God has purposed that relationship draw the young man out (*ahgav*, meaning to leave, loose oneself from, or depart from)¹⁸ of his family home to create a new family with his wife.¹⁹

¹⁵E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, The Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 17.

¹⁶Rick Holland, “Godly Relationships” (sermon, Grace Community Church College Ministry Retreat, Oxnard, CA, January 2002).

¹⁷Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), 145.

¹⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 736–37.

¹⁹Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 137.

God inspired Moses to write a theological interjection into the narrative. Structurally, it is as if he put the narrative on pause and inserted this God-ordained purpose in order to show the significance both of the creation of woman to complete and complement man, as well as to demonstrate that the normative human family structure will be for a man to leave the household of his youth and progress into a relationship with his chosen wife.²⁰ Additionally, the idea of “one flesh” is critical. It purposes the idea of two people becoming of one singular mind and purpose. Leupold says, “Becoming one flesh involves the complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in intercourse.”²¹

To summarize, this verse offers a theological reasoning to explain the significant rationale for God creating a suitable helper for Adam. A man’s design is to depart from the household of his parents, to find a wife, and to create a new union in which a new household and family develops. The woman’s role as a helper is not reduced to that of a workmate, but rather as a complement to where the man is lacking, serving to provide the means for wise counsel as well as an exclusive relational connection, romance, and procreation.²²

Theological Explanation and Commentary

These passages from Genesis are deeply relatable theological truths. God has demonstrated three elements of a mandate for man’s existence in His creation that are directly applicable to the church throughout the ages, including young adults today. God’s mandate for man to be a worker is bred into the very foundation of his existence. Man was literally led by the hand into the garden for the purpose of residing there and

²⁰Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 137.

²¹Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, 145.

²²Andrew Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 71–72.

being a steward over the land. That is not to say the significance of every man is to be a gardener and animal keeper, but it is to say that every man has built into his purpose to be a worker and to serve the Lord (who owns all things) with integrity as he does so.²³

Similarly, God's command to obey His Word and to live according to His calling (Rom 12:1) is founded in the giving of law to Adam in verses 16–17. Man's sin nature is inherited through his connection to Adam's breaking of this law.²⁴ Part of the mandate given to man is the responsibility to live in obedience to God's law found in His word. Only through the death and resurrection of Christ is man brought to spiritual life and made able to do so, but the mandate is still there for all men of all generations.

Lastly, God's ideal design for man is for him to be complemented in his existence by a suitable woman who can live life with him, have children with him, worship the Lord together with him, and meet his needs where he is lacking (and vice versa).²⁵ Today's EA culture may have positive views on the idea of marriage, but God's ideal design is for a monogamous, exclusive relationship that forms for the purpose of leaving home and joining with a wife for the purpose of working together, living in obedience to the Lord together, and living in service to one another, reflecting Christ from the home (to children, should the Lord provide them) out to the surrounding culture.

Concluding Thoughts

This section has looked at the theological implications drawn from Genesis 2 through a careful exegetical study that extrapolated three elements of mankind's existence under God's rule. First is that man was created with a mandate to be a worker in his designed role. Second is that man was created to be an obedient subject of God's

²³Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 10.

²⁴Boice, *Genesis*, 17.

²⁵Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 137.

rule. Third, Genesis 2 shows that God declared that it is not good for man to be alone, but rather his ideal state is to leave his family home, find a wife, and start a new family. Though this final one is not a requirement, it is notable that God would declare the only thing “not good” about his creation to be man’s aloneness, and the cure he provided for that state was to create a helper, a complementary soul who could traverse life with him. If wise men fear the Lord and follow His commandments, it would be wise to understand man’s created purpose as a worker, his created status as an obedient subject, and his ideal state as joined to a wife.

The Obedient Man of Deuteronomy 5

The purpose of the book of Deuteronomy is to show Israel’s re-commitment to Yahweh as their God and to submit to Him as His people. The name Deuteronomy literally means “second law.”²⁶ It demonstrates God’s grace in giving His people a second, renewed covenant and the opportunity to seek His grace in fulfilling their commitment to Him.

Though Christ is the fulfillment of the law for His church, and thus much of Deuteronomy is not directly applicable in every-day Christian life, a few pertinent gnomic truths needs to be examined for the context of this study. Exposing the truth found in these texts will help the biblical counselor to be armed with divine wisdom and precepts when entering into discipleship or counseling situations with emerging adults.

Background and Context

After a forty-year wilderness sojourn, and the extent of punishment to a wicked and unfaithful generation, God saw fit to re-establish His covenant with the new generation of His people.²⁷ Roughly around 1440 BC, Moses gathered the people in front

²⁶John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: ESV Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 245.

²⁷MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 245.

of Mt. Sinai and prepared to meet with God in order to receive the law passed down from the hand of God, meant to be the guiding principles that set His people apart from the world. After meeting with God, Moses brought down the law and read it to the people.

Exegesis

Though the entire Decalogue is beneficial for understanding God’s moral expectations, the chosen passages are directly pertinent to the discussion. The defining factors of emerging adulthood, particularly how they interface with the Christian faith, must be guided by the principles of worship of God alone (no idolatry), a genuineness of faith (no taking the name of the Lord in vain), biblical obedience to God through reverence of parents (obedience and respect for family authority), and sexual purity before and after marriage (no adultery).

Deuteronomy 5:7. “You shall have no other gods before me.” The linguistic structure here is straightforward. Calvin notes, “In this commandment, God enjoins that He alone should be worshipped, and requires a worship free from superstition.”²⁸ The Hebrew *lo* and the imperfect verb structure permanently forbids the practice of idolatry in any form.²⁹ The prepositional drive of *al-panaiah*, or “before me” is one of positional preference or authority.³⁰ It could also be taken as “over” or “above.”³¹

Deuteronomy 5:11. “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold Him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” The Hebrew *lo* and imperfect verb structure again permanently forbids the idea of taking, or

²⁸John Calvin and Charles William Bingham, *Commentary on the Last Four Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 1:417–18.

²⁹Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 36.

³⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 748.

³¹Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 272–73.

nasah, the name of the Lord God in vain. The primary drive behind this idea is not referring to profanity or the flippant use of the Lord's name, otherwise why would the Lord "not hold Him guiltless?" That is a very serious warning. Rather, this should be translated, "You shall not carry (as in, carry a royal banner for a king, thus associating with his household)³² the name of the 'LORD' your God in emptiness." The warning is against all improper adoption, use, or veiled manipulation in the use of God's name when not exhibiting true faith and character of a child of God.³³ It is a warning against those who call themselves Christians and live a meaningless, empty faith with no good works to prove regeneration and the new birth (Jas 2:18–25).

Deuteronomy 5:16a. "Honor your father and mother, as the LORD commanded you." Another fairly straightforward interpretation, though often misapplied, this verse calls for the child (anyone born to parents, any age or stage in life) to *kaveid*, or to hold in high regard, but due to its *piel* imperfect (characteristic action) form, the factitive notion relays an idea of causation.³⁴ The translational idea should be read as "Cause your father and mother to be honored," or, "Bring honor to your father and mother through your life," describing the received benefits of a life lived by the child that reflects respect, love, and obedience (in youth), and respect, faithfulness to God, and love and care for them as they age.³⁵ The actions of the child's life, along with their attitude directed toward their parents, is what will ultimately bring the parents honor.

Deuteronomy 5:18. "You shall not commit adultery." The literal translation of

³²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 669–71.

³³Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 156.

³⁴Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 25.

³⁵Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 154.

this verse is “Never adulterize.” The simple idea is exceptionally strongly delivered (again, the *lo* and the imperfect permanent negation). There is no ambiguity, there is no wiggle room. The verse speaks to the destructive nature of the sin of unfaithfulness through sexual infidelity as it relates to both men and women and to both the single and married. Whether seen as unfaithfulness to a husband/wife or unfaithfulness to the God who gave the commandment, the standard applies and all who partake in sex outside the confines of biblical marriage are guilty of violating this command.³⁶

Theological Explanation and Commentary

The timeless moral codes found in the Decalogue are all pertinent to the discussion of EA, but in reference to the categorical issues presented in chapter 2, the selection of these for exegetical study will prove fruitful when presenting a counseling paradigm in chapter 5.

The notion of other gods, being anything that can supplant the rule of God in the human heart, is highly relevant to the discussion of EA. When God’s rule is replaced by individualized notions of holiness or morality, or by the destructive deceitfulness of MTD (as a refresher, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism), God is replaced with the idol of self. When emerging adults deny responsibilities toward work, God’s law, or His intentions for their lives in maturation and adult responsibilities, God is replaced with the idol of self. When the pursuit of pleasure through sexual experimentation or other modes of self-fulfillment becomes practiced, God is replaced with the idol of self. Self-focus, remember, is one of the defining characteristics of EA.³⁷

Similar in the root cause of self-focus, taking the Lord’s name in vain (or

³⁶John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, new ed. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 273–74.

³⁷Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 470–74.

adopting God’s name, carrying God’s royal banner, all while living a life that reflects an empty faith)³⁸ is a habit not unique to EA but prevalent nonetheless in emerging adults. Many have adopted the name of Christ due to religious convention or family ties, but fail to exhibit evidence of the new birth, regeneration, or faithful works of righteousness. To emulate Christ, Dunn and Sundene explain, “Christ wholly obeyed the Father. This is therefore the essential marker of the Christlife.”³⁹ This reality must be emphatically conveyed through biblical counseling and discipleship relationships.

Bringing honor to the name of parents can only happen through an exemplary life of obedience to God, emulation of Christ-like behavior, and a heartfelt desire to bring respect and commendation to the parents as a reflection of the behaviors of their children.⁴⁰ Emerging adults are often found guilty of violating this command by presuming on their parents’ grace, taking extended advantage of their provision, and failing to live in a way that brings praise and admiration to their parents. Though emerging adults often have close relationships with their families, and many even depend on them greatly,⁴¹ it is their responsibility to live up to this mandate.

Finally, the normalization of sex in EA has many causes, but the resulting effect is that this commandment is often neglected or outright rejected by emerging adults across the spectrum, even those claiming to be religious, choosing instead to adopt the perspective of normalizing sexual freedom.⁴² Biblical counselors need to be aware of the

³⁸Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 156.

³⁹Richard R. Dunn and Jana L. Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 62.

⁴⁰Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 154.

⁴¹Andrew W. Collins and Manfred van Dulmen. “Friendships and Romance in Emerging Adulthood: Assessing Distinctiveness in Close Relationships,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 223.

⁴²Eva S. Lefkowitz and Meghan M. Gillen, “Sex Is Just a Normal Part of Life: Sexuality in Emerging Adulthood,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 239.

pervasiveness of this issue and be prepared to encounter issues of sexual immorality often when counseling emerging adults.

Concluding Thoughts

An exegetical study through selected portions of the Decalogue has yielded biblical wisdom for addressing some of the defining issues and characteristics of EA. Though not all defining characteristics of EA are sinful or volitional, some are. Those that are must be confronted with godly wisdom as they manifest in the lives of emerging adult Christians in the church. Biblical counselors have an opportunity to positively affect sanctified change in the lives of these young people, or to point out the possibility that the faith they claim may not be real, and to help them come to a true saving faith in Jesus Christ.

The Penitent Man of Psalms 32 and 37

It is helpful, when building a theological foundation of biblical masculinity, to look at an example of a godly man and how he responded to failure, to temptation, to reconciliation with God, and to the overall progression of his life toward his mandate to lead his family and his nation. The following study into the Psalms will take a look at the life of King David for those reasons. Scripture refers to David as “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). What will be encouraging for this study is to note that this did not mean David was flawless or always made the right choices, but when it came to contrition, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and setting his mind toward the will of God, his true character was proven.⁴³

Background and Context

Psalms 32 contains some of the deepest theology of sorrow, repentance, and

⁴³Steven J. Lawson, *Psalms 1–75*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003), 170.

forgiveness in all of Scripture. David, the first righteous King of Israel, penned this psalm after the greatest period of willful sin in his life, his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, which led to the murder of her husband, the King's friend, Uriah.⁴⁴ Barrick notes, too, that Psalm 32 could actually be the fulfillment of Psalm 51:13 ("Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will be converted to you.")⁴⁵ The theology found in these Psalms will establish what the heart of a godly man looks like in the time of sinful failure, as well as to encourage the reader that God's forgiveness and restoration is a gift of unbelievable magnitude and life-changing power. Kidner states, "If we have experienced God's heavy hand, we should appreciate His even gentler touch. . . . The point here is God's vigilance in intimate care for His people."⁴⁶

Also greatly relevant to the discussion of identity and fulfillment in emerging adulthood is Psalm 37, which teaches the security and divine blessing for those who trust and obey the Lord, while contrasting that against the opposite destiny for those who practice wickedness and lawlessness.⁴⁷ Coupled with Psalm 32, these two build a picture of a mature, godly man's response to sin, his desire to honor the Lord, and his theology of divine care through difficulty and the seeming prosperity of wickedness in his world.

Exegesis

The Psalms are filled with godly instruction for wise living, but these two psalms will help to paint a picture of masculine sensitivity toward sin and a proper posture of submission to God and His law as the moral authority over life.

⁴⁴Ibid., 171, 264–65.

⁴⁵William D. Barrick, "Psalm 32—The Confession of Sin" (lecture presented to the Berean Sunday School, Placerita Bible Church, Newhall, CA, 2004), 1, accessed December 1st, 2016 http://drbarrick.org/files/studynotes/Psalms/Ps_032.pdf.

⁴⁶Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 153–54.

⁴⁷Summary statement of Spurgeon's overarching assessment of the Psalm. For a detailed study, see Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David, Psalms 27–57* (New York: Marshall Brothers, 1881), 189–97.

Psalm 32. This psalm is the first noted *maskil* in the Bible. It roughly translates as “an artistically molded song in keeping with the principles of wisdom.”⁴⁸ The four major principles can be found in verses 1–2 (the blessing of the forgiven believer), 3–4 (the depression of the sinful believer), 5–7 (the gracious forgiveness of God), and 8–11 (the wise instruction of God).⁴⁹

Verses 1–2 speak to the blessings of forgiveness. Verse 1 contains a similar statement to Psalm 1 as they both begin with a conditional blessing. A literal rendering could be, “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are carried away and covered.” Verse 2 follows with a parallel statement with a positive spin on the familiar *lo* and imperfect Hebrew permanent negation, “Blessed is the man against whom the LORD *never* counts iniquity.”⁵⁰

David goes on in verses 3–4 to describe the effects of unrepentant sin, saying when he kept silent about his sin, “my bones wasted away.” The idea behind *balah* (wasted) is to say that he had lost his vitality, or that he had become feeble in strength as if it had utterly failed him.⁵¹ The psycho-somatic power of the violated conscience here validated in Scripture.⁵² He continues in verse 4 speaking of the *kaveid*, or heavy burden that was on his heart due to his unconfessed sin. He speaks of God’s chastisement as a “heavy hand” that was pressing down on his soul. This truth is reflected in Proverbs 3:12, “for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights”.

The third principle of God’s gracious forgiveness comes in verses 5–7. David

⁴⁸Barrick, “Psalm 32—The Confession of Sin,” 2–3.

⁴⁹Though many commentaries offer differing views on how this Psalm breaks down, I have chosen to use the textual markers of *Selah* as well as thematic structures to come up with this outline. Not only does it honor the meaning and intent of the text, it also makes a significant point for the nature of masculine maturity as it relates to spiritual formation. This will prove relevant in Chap. 5.

⁵⁰Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 36.

⁵¹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 116.

⁵²John Street, “Counseling Depression” (lecture given at The Master’s Seminary, Sun Valley, CA, 2014).

mirrors the language of sin being carried away and covered up (the blessing of forgiveness in vv. 1–2) by saying that he acknowledged and uncovered his sin before God, confessed his sin (the *hifil* imperfect cohortative of *yadah*, emphasizing the intensified and unfettered exposure of his sin before God, but also the outright forsaking of it. This is a verbal description of genuine desired repentance),⁵³ and the Lord in turn *nasah* (*qal* perfect, the completed and permanent action of “carried away”)⁵⁴ his sin, never to be thought of again (Ps 103:12). Verses 6–7 show David expounding on this incredible work of grace and giving clear instruction of his own to all godly men to follow the same path of seeking forgiveness rather than allowing sin to remain and evaporate the life from the godly man’s soul. He describes God as a refuge from sin, a hiding place, preserving believers from harm and guaranteeing deliverance.⁵⁵

The final principle in verses 8–11 has David recording the thoughts of God on how He will counsel and instruct the godly man to live a righteous life. God instructs men to look to Him for wisdom on how to live under the close watch of a loving God. Verse 8 gives two clear directives: God will give wisdom for righteous living, and God will both oversee and observe those principles being followed.⁵⁶ The warning in verse 9 is that the Lord will not remain with a stubborn man who does not listen to or follow God’s wise instruction, but instead, as Romans 1:24 describes, God will “give them over to their lusts,” demonstrating they were never truly saved (1 John 2:19).

Closing out the Psalm, verses 10–11 recap the truth of the material presented: the wicked life is full of sorrow, the righteous life is characterized by the steadfast love of

⁵³Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 65–66.

⁵⁴Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 246–47.

⁵⁵Eric Lane, *Psalms 1–89: The Lord Saves*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2006), 154.

⁵⁶Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906–07), 281–82.

God, and that is something for which the righteous man should rejoice and give worship to God.

Psalm 37. Because of the acrostic nature (each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet),⁵⁷ there is simply too much material in this Psalm to cover for the scope of this study, so selected ideas will be explored so as to build onto the wisdom from Scripture that has been uncovered so far in this chapter. For the sake of this study, the focus will zero in on verses 1b, and 4–6.

David's comments in verse 1b give a permanent negative command (Hebrew *lo* and imperfect)⁵⁸ to the believer expressly forbidding any jealous desire of the wicked lifestyle. The *lo* negation and the imperfect *piel* jussive of *qanah* denotes a strong negative command to never be envious of such behavior or to desire the perceived pleasure that a sinful lifestyle brings.⁵⁹

In verse 4, David gives an intensified expressed command (*hithpael* imperative of *anahg*)⁶⁰ to the believer that delight is to be found in the Lord, giving a mirrored positive action to the negative command found in verse 1b.⁶¹ The promised result of this command is that God will grant the desires of the heart. Literally, He will *natan*, or set, place, or establish the desires.⁶² The jussive drive of the *qal* form suggest this is a command, thus God will actually command the heart to desire righteous things, setting the course of life on their right track.

⁵⁷Lawson, *Psalms 1–75*, 198.

⁵⁸Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert*, 36.

⁵⁹Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 42–43, 61.

⁶⁰Brow Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 772.

⁶¹Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 297.

⁶²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 678.

Verse 5 commands the believer to *galal*, or to commit firmly to the Lord.⁶³ The verb appears in the imperative, requiring or commanding the action.⁶⁴ The second verbal command is to trust, or *bahtach* (*qal* imperfect), the Lord. Paired with the previous verbal action, the believer is to commit firmly and completely to the Lord, while continuing to place trust in Him always, handing burdens off to Him.⁶⁵ The result of obedience to these two commands is that “he will act (*qal* imperfect of *ahsah*),” meaning that He will continue to bring about righteous works and blessing for those who obey (Ps 1:1–3; Phil 1:6).⁶⁶ This is confirmed in the promise of verse 6, “He will bring forth your righteousness . . .” or literally, “He will cause your righteousness to come forth.” The *hifil* perfect of *yitzah* describes a work of completion and of full culmination. It speaks to the future promise granted through obedience to the previous command.⁶⁷

Theological Explanation and Commentary

Psalms 32 has four main principles: The blessing of the forgiven believer, the depression of the sinful believer, the gracious forgiveness of God, and the wise instruction of God. The life of David illustrates clearly how a godly, mature man should respond when he has transgressed against God. He illustrates that when he hid his sin, the Lord’s hand was heavy upon him, he wasted away in weakness and despair, but when he came to the Lord seeking true repentance and forgiveness, it was freely and readily granted to him.⁶⁸ The principle is universal for all believers. The conscience serves as a

⁶³Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 61.

⁶⁴Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 63.

⁶⁵Lane, *Psalms 1–89*, 176.

⁶⁶Briggs and Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 326.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 327.

⁶⁸Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 83.

warning siren directing the believer to turn to the Lord and discover if the vertical relationship is in any way severed. Contrary to the MTD worldview of many emerging adults, God is not a disconnected observer who only intercedes when he needs to fix a problem,⁶⁹ but rather he is a loving father who, as he did with Adam, actively takes man by the hand and guides him in wisdom and instruction. For Christians, that instruction comes from the written Word of God found in Scripture.

Psalm 37 has the goal of reminding people that God will reward righteousness and without question He will punish those who practice wickedness. Lawson writes, “It may appear that the unrighteous are excelling in this world above and beyond believers. But righteous people must remember that appearances are deceiving. God will have the final say.”⁷⁰ Proverbs 11:21 states, “Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished.” David clarifies for the reader in Psalm 37 that an evil person is one who rejects God’s authority and disobeys his commands. This is a sharp warning to all who would aim their lives strictly at self-fulfillment and self-rule.

The verses selected speak to both prohibited and required actions on behalf of believers. Verse 1 teaches believers not to envy or desire the lives of the wicked and reminds them that the wicked will one day pay for all their transgressions. This truth is incredibly pertinent for today’s youth who see the world promoting its pleasurable agenda through every possible media outlet. Biblical counselors must take note of these desires and counsel young men wisely toward godliness based on these commands.

Verse 4 picks up on the expressly negative command of not envying the world, or allowing the heart to be enticed by its delights, but rather to actively and aggressively place all the hearts desires on the Lord, the provider of all good things, and in return God

⁶⁹R. Albert Mohler, “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: The New American Religion,” April 18, 2005, Christian Post, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion-6266/>.

⁷⁰Lawson, *Psalms 1–75*, 198.

would implant righteous desires into the heart to set it on the right path. The need for prayer and constant pursuit of holiness could not be more vital for today's generation. The world is aggressively promoting its agenda of self-rule and indulgent worldview, and the young believers should be armed with truth to help them overcome the temptations presented to them daily.

Verses 5 and 6 couple together to form two commands and two promises: a firm, settled commitment to God and a continued and growing trust in God that result in God acting through the believer to cause righteousness to spring forth. The instruction is a clear cause/effect relationship that young believers can take to heart. When a believer firmly commits to God and purposes to trust in Him, God will work through that individual to bring about righteousness.

Concluding Thoughts

By establishing a picture of a godly man's response to trials, to tragically falling into sin and seeking repentance and forgiveness and a restored relationship to God, and by seeing his understanding of God's care and protection that is provided for the obedient believer, these two psalms have given instruction on how a mature, godly man is to relate to God in even the worst situations in life. Many other aspects of David's life are relevant to the discussion of godly strength and maturity (i.e., his trust in God in the greatest difficulties of being pursued by Saul to the point of death, his faithful command over the nation of Israel, leading them in a spiritual revival of covenant faithfulness, and his humble submission to the rule of God over him, realizing that even as King of Israel he was merely a steward of God's people and land, just as Adam was a steward of the garden). But these relevant points can translate across the flow of history to the modern generation, and biblical counselors can help young adults struggling with difficult circumstances by showing them how a mature, godly man behaved while learning from his failures and his triumphs.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at selected passages from the Old Testament to offer exegetical insights from the word of God concerning many of the underlying sins of the present culture and common traits of emerging adulthood. This study was by no means comprehensive of all the OT has to offer concerning these matters, but for the sake of space the scope has been limited to texts deemed applicable to those modern cultural concerns.

In the following chapter, the same process will be applied to the selected New Testament texts. Then chapter 5, more passages will receive attention as they become relevant in the course of establishing a paradigm for biblical counseling geared toward EA and the modern cultural issues faced by emerging adults.

CHAPTER 4
EXEGESIS OF SELECT NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS
RELEVANT FOR GODLY MASCULINITY

The choice of texts in this chapter reflects what I see as directly addressing either the underlying foundation for godly Christian character that is expected from young men, or the fundamental issues regarding EA. The NT offers direct instruction for Christian character, as well as godly wisdom for understanding how young men can live lives that honor the Lord and serve toward continued sanctification.

The method of material presentation will follow the same structure as the previous chapter, while broaching texts that are relevant to the discussion. Each text will build a picture of godly wisdom that will be employed in the methodology and paradigm that will be presented in chapter five. All Scripture references will be taken from the ESV and all Greek textual references will be transliterated into English for ease of reading.

The Sensible Man of Titus 2:6

Titus 2 is a text that offers categorical instruction to Titus himself, as well as four major subgroups of the church body: older men, older women, young women, and younger men.¹ For the purposes of this study, the simple and yet clear instruction offered to Titus from Paul lends perfectly to the spiritual formation and sanctification of emerging adults in the church.

¹George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1992), 305.

Background and Context

Titus was serving as the pastor and primary elder of the newly formed Christian community on the island of Crete. As he faced various challenges in ministry, Paul sought to impart to him Spirit-inspired wisdom for him as the leader of this church so as to see a uniquely spiritually challenged part of the world grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to reflect that knowledge in how they lived daily. Paul instructed Titus to serve as the primary example of godliness and godly leadership in order to model for the church exactly how they were to live so as to obey and honor Christ.

Cretans in particular were characterized by a senseless and highly immoral society who had been inundated with aberrant forms of Christianity.² Much like today's Western culture, Crete faced unique challenges in the culture that drew people away from a solid faith in the instruction of the apostles and toward gross immorality, so much so that the apostle Paul himself stated in Titus 1:12, "Cretans are always liars and lazy gluttons." Because of this, Paul needed to give Titus extra instruction for how to give wise counsel and soul care to the members of his congregation.

Exegesis

Quite plainly, Titus 2:6 states, "Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled." The flow of the dialogue has already given instruction to three other subgroups of the congregation: the older men, the older women, and young women. In this case, Paul chose to state the comparative adjective "younger" as opposed to "young" due to the fact that this group speaks to all men who are under the age or spiritual condition of being qualified as a deacon or an elder, otherwise stated as all men who are categorized as younger than the "old men" already instructed.³ Titus, being a young man

²Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 303.

³R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), 913.

himself, was to be set forth as an example for how to live out this instruction.⁴

Paul begins by setting forth the subject of the verse with *tous neoterous*, or “young men.”⁵ Following with the adverb *hosaoutos*, Paul states “in the same manner” or “likewise,” referring to how Titus was to give the instruction.⁶ Following this, Paul’s imperative command to Titus centers around *parakaleo*, meaning “to urge” or to “strongly exhort.” Calvin states that this means, “Let them be well regulated and obedient to reason.”⁷ The form of this imperative is also crucial. Paul uses a present active imperative, implying that this instruction was to be given constantly, repeatedly, and as a way of life for the younger men.⁸ This imperative is followed by a helping verbal in the form of an infinitive *sophreneo*, meaning “to be self-controlled,” “to be sensible,” “to be of sound mind,” “sober-minded,” or “to be in a right mind.”⁹

Theological Explanation and Commentary

The cultural context in which Titus was called to minister shares many parallels with today’s Western society. Young believers today are inundated with sensationalized versions of spirituality and aberrant forms of Christianity, or outright rejections of morality, that require correction. Just as Titus was called to instruct his fellow believers in his context to be faithful to the teachings of Paul who was calling

⁴I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 251.

⁵Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 424.

⁶William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 2000), 412.

⁷John Calvin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 194.

⁸Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 485.

⁹Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 612–13

them to adhere to a gospel-focused code of conduct that would set them apart from society,¹⁰ this instruction of a reasonable faith, a sensible and self-controlled lifestyle, is the core of sanctified action for younger men in the church today. Marshall says, “The writer is again concerned with frivolity in the church, lack of serious purpose in life, and the wasting of time on fruitless discussions instead of aiming to live usefully.”¹¹ Surely, this timeless instruction sits at the very foundation of how younger men can find a fixed point of reference for how to orient their thoughts, feelings, and actions and to direct those toward a life lived to honor Christ.

Concluding Thoughts

Titus 2:6 should serve as a grounding point for discussions on sanctification and biblical counseling for younger men. There is timeless and purposed wisdom presented in this simple and yet profound command. If young men can be taught to control their thoughts, passions, actions, and to purpose themselves for a reasonable life of faith in Jesus Christ, that grounded principle will guide and dictate for them a future direction of sanctified growth that fixes them on a road toward godliness from which it will be difficult (and must be deliberately pursued!) to deviate. Biblical counselors should keep this verse in the forefront of their minds when approaching younger men in counseling, knowing that Paul purposefully laid this foundation as a starting point for sanctified spiritual growth.

Rejecting The Double-Minded Man of James 1:5–8; 4:8

The logic behind including James’ reference of the “double-minded man” in his epistle stems from the EA tendency toward indecisiveness and lack of direction.

¹⁰Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 718.

¹¹Marshall and Towner, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 252.

Those points have already been established as a characteristic of this unique developmental stage. James, though, instructs his readers to be constantly in prayer seeking godly wisdom and then setting a path toward that wisdom, not deviating or being distracted by this world's wisdom. He warns that Christians who seek both God's wisdom as well as the wisdom of the world are double-minded, seeking two opposing systems, and must focus their minds on the wisdom from God in order to find a life of sanctified growth toward Christ-likeness.

Background and Context

James was written most likely by James, the half-brother of Jesus and brother to Jude around the middle of the first century AD.¹² James' purpose was to write this letter to Jewish believers who were facing persecution, had been dispersed, and were not under regular teaching of the apostles. Thus, this earliest of NT canon writings would have served the purpose of a primer for sanctified living and a handbook for the testing of genuine faith.¹³

Exegesis

Due to the nature of MTD and relativistic moral influence on the church, it is necessary to understand James' instruction about being "double-minded" so that young men can see the need for complete fidelity to Jesus Christ as Lord.

James 1:5–8. The focus of this exegesis will be on the language found in verse 8. The word *dipsuchos* speaks to one who is "double-minded," "double-souled," or one who is "fickle" or "inconsistent."¹⁴ This describes a man who is aimed at two separate

¹²Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Apollos, 2009), 9–27.

¹³John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 1874–75.

¹⁴Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 153.

goals or who is attempting to serve both righteousness and sin and is not in a “wholehearted, consistent, and integral faith commitment to God.”¹⁵

The negative warning in this passage comes as James describes in verses 5–7 how a Christian should seek wisdom from God and trust wholeheartedly in that wisdom, then states that one who doubts this wisdom is *aner dipsuchos*, or a man who is double-minded. Richardson notes, “Such a double-minded man attempts to live with a contradictory blend of desires from two worlds: pleasure and virtue. But he cannot serve both God and self.”¹⁶ James calls his readers to be wholeheartedly devoted to God.

James 4:8. This truth is bolstered when James calls for Christians to “cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” The parallelism in this passage denotes both daily cleansing in the present active imperative of *katharizo*, as well as the urgent call to immediate action of the aorist imperative to purify the heart in *hagnizo* (*hagnisate*).¹⁷ This parallel command speaks to both the outer man (hands) and the inner man (heart), both to daily washing and to immediate repentance.¹⁸ The implication is that the double-minded man of James 1 and 4 languishes in a middle ground, living as a “fence-straddler” and with a soul “divided between [true] faith and the world.”¹⁹

Theological Explanation and Commentary

James puts a serious call for solidarity with Christ forward in his epistle.

¹⁵Moo, *The Letter of James*, 62.

¹⁶Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 68.

¹⁷Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 486.

¹⁸John MacArthur, *James*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 209–10.

¹⁹James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 60.

McCartney says, “A person of double mind is ultimately trying to serve two masters. In some ways, such ‘double-mindedness’ is the essence of sin and unfaithfulness One cannot live a life of integrity and faith if one is waffling on such a basic issue, and thus ‘doubters’ are unstable.”²⁰ For the EA community in the church, this is a clarion call for fidelity to Christ over culture. The Jewish Christians who were scattered under oppression faced extreme testing of their faith in the face of a Christ-hating Roman-ruled society.²¹ Today’s church is “scattered” amongst the nations, fighting against worldly influences that would seek to invade the church and cause believers to split their allegiances between Christ and the world. James’ call for absolute solidarity of mind, soul, body, and spirit to the will and wisdom of God is essential to the Christian faith.

The EA community faces extreme pressures from the world around them as they attend universities that mock faith, that scoff at absolute truth and biblical authority, and who would desire a capitulation to the amoral standards of society at large. Biblical counselors who are engaging in dialogue and in formal counseling or discipleship with emerging adults have strong words from James to utilize for a call to declare faithfulness from them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Any other posture will result in chastisement and lack of blessing from God as he seeks to bring them into conformity to His will.²²

Concluding Thoughts

James was writing uniquely as the first Spirit-inspired author of NT canon writings.²³ He was charged with writing material that would lay a fundamental theological foundation for the newly forming church. His use of the term “double-

²⁰Dan G. McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 91–92.

²¹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 23–25.

²²Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 74–75.

²³MacArthur, *James*, 5.

minded” in such a strong negative sense put the onus on the individual Christian to be wholly devoted to Christ as both Lord and Savior over their lives, with no divided allegiance. The same holds true for every Christian throughout the church age.

The Courageous Man of 1 Corinthians 16:13–14

The importance of this text to the discussion of EA ties directly with Paul’s four imperative commands that will be explored in this section. The theological implications of these commands speak directly to the issues of prolonged adolescence, continued youthful tendencies, and clear instruction on how young men are to transition into mature men of faith.

Background and Context

There is no doubt that the Corinthian church posed one of the most difficult ministry contexts for the apostle Paul. Hagner notes that Paul established this church on his second missionary journey after meeting Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth sometime around AD 50–52.²⁴ Hagner also implies that the difficulty of this context is reflected in the amount of writing instruction that Paul gave to the Corinthians. He notes that the NT canon reflects only two of the four letters that the church received from Paul, but the truth of the matter is that the context of ministry here was difficult due to the rampant sexual immorality (reflected in Paul’s instructions and admonition throughout 1 Corinthians) and idolatry that was characteristic of the city.²⁵ Paul’s instruction from ch. 16 will prove to be pertinent and relevant to the study of engaging emerging adults in biblical counseling.

²⁴Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 476–77.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 478–82.

Exegesis

Paul gives four imperative commands in verse 13 that are targeted toward functional biblical masculinity, as well as a qualifier imperative in verse 14 that issues the parameter in which those imperatives will operate. The present imperative drive of all four commands imply a continual lifestyle of action in these manners. The first two imperatives are qualified by a prepositional phrase *gregoreo*²⁶ and *steko*,²⁷ “be alert” and “stand firm” or “stand constant” are both given in reference to the phrase *en te pisteo*, or “in the faith.” Thistleton notes that “the gospel faith should remain the foundation of the community . . . they must stand fast in the truth of the gospel.”²⁸

The following two present imperatives aim at the character of all the men in the church at Corinth (and by extension, all men of Christ): *andridzomai*, rendered “act like men” or “behave bravely” or “be men of courage,”²⁹ and *krataio*, translated “be strong” or “acquire strength,”³⁰ do not refer merely to physical characteristics, but rather the conduct of mental fortitude and Christian character. Ciampa and Rosner put it this way, “It seems likely that these terms are not being used to refer to being men as opposed to women, but of acting like mature (brave) men as opposed to fearful children.”³¹

The final imperative found in verse 14 qualifies the channel through which all of these characteristics are to flow. Paul commands, “Let all that you do be done in love.” The only verbal in verse 14 is a verb of being, *ginomai*, found in a present imperative form again and serves to drive the point home that “all things in love” *be* a characteristic

²⁶Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 122.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 588.

²⁸Anthony C. Thistleton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1336.

²⁹Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 43.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 358.

³¹Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 855.

and ongoing action.³²

Theological Explanation and Commentary

Paul's instruction to the men in Corinth gave them parameters for how they were to behave as men of faith. These four imperatives, followed by a fifth qualifier imperative, show men in the church how they are to spiritually posture themselves for the battles against their surrounding culture. Ciampa and Rosner state, "The contents of this letter suggest that [the Corinthians] needed to be more vigilant against the leavening influence of certain Roman and Corinthian values and moral standards or expectations."³³ The point they make is relevant as well to the church today. Men in the church must act like men, being watchful of the infiltration of false doctrine into their homes and churches, standing firm in the truth of the word of God, having the courage to confront such falsities, and being strong enough, rooted in truth, to withstand any storm of negative spiritual influence. Fee states it this way regarding the Corinthian church, ". . . in the present context, Paul is probably urging them to remain steadfast in the gospel that he preached, and to do so courageously in the face of the errors and behavioral aberrations that are rife among them."³⁴

The church today, and particularly the men in the church, face intense cultural pressures to conform to the image of the world. Paul's implicit instruction dictates to men a role that must be adopted by all who call themselves men of God and followers of Christ. They must demonstrate a steadfast and unshakable faith rooted in the knowledge of the word of God, exercised in love, functioning as bold gatekeepers of the truth that sanctifies and protects the church.

³²Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 115–16.

³³Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 854.

³⁴Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 828.

Concluding Thoughts

It is easy to see how this text is relevant to the discussion of issues among EA men in the church. Indecision and subjective relativistic philosophy have infiltrated society and the church so much so that it seems no one has the right to declare objective truth claims, nor does it seem that many among those who claim Christ have the intestinal fortitude to declare righteousness in the face of immoral opposition. This generation must be instructed to do so, for Christ has given this mantle to all men who would claim Him as their Lord and Savior.

The Careful Man of Ephesians 5:15–16

Ephesians 5 contains a chain of commands for how to live in a manner that is pleasing to God. Paul gave explicit imperative commands in 1 Corinthians 16 for all men of God to live rooted firmly in the faith that was given to them. This chapter serves as a source of commands for how to execute that faith in a way that pleases God and reflects Christ, all while walking in love toward each other and toward the lost world in which the Ephesians lived. Centered in the chapter in verses 15–16 is a command about wise living in dark and difficult times.

Background and Context

Paul penned the letter to Ephesus while imprisoned in Rome between AD 61–62.³⁵ He had visited Ephesus in AD 52 and 53, helping to establish the first church in the city on his second missionary journey. Ephesus was an idolatrous city whose church suffered from outside influences of asceticism and false teachers who had infiltrated the church. This letter was written to the church in order to counter such teaching and to address issues of union with Christ, unity in the congregation, positional blessing, and

³⁵Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 96–97.

practical Christian behavior.³⁶ Paul wanted to emphasize first the totality of the work of Christ and the resulting positional blessing of the believer (Eph 1–3), as well as the practical expectations for all Christians who have received adoption into the family of God (Eph 4–6). It is in the latter half, focusing on these practical expectations, where the text speaks directly to EA concerns and issues, particularly how to live when the days are evil.

Exegesis

The present active imperative command in verse 15 is *blepete*, translated “look,” or “perceive.”³⁷ This imperative is linked to the modifying adverb *akribos*, rendered “carefully,” “circumspectly,” or “with diligent and accurate precision.”³⁸ The next phrase further clarifies the present indicative action *pos peripateite*, or “how you walk (or, ‘are walking’).” Hoehner states that the interrogative particle *pos* is used to refer to the mode, connecting the action of “looking carefully” to “walk.” He noted that the stressed purpose is to look carefully “how” you walk.³⁹ The final clarification in this verse comes with the last modifying adjectival phrase *me hos asophoi, all’ hos sophoi*, translated “not as unwise, rather as wise,” with first a negative and then a positive aspect to the description of how to walk.⁴⁰

The thought continues in verse 16 where a participial phrase further defines the parameters of the action. *Exagoradzo* is a participle that describes a “purchasing.” Thayer translates it, “to redeem with a price from the power of another,”⁴¹ with *ton kairon*, or

³⁶Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 97–106.

³⁷Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 103.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

³⁹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 691.

⁴⁰John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, ed. W. Young (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1883), 392.

⁴¹Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 220.

“the time,”⁴² being the accusative object of that purchase. Eadie notes that this reference is not chronological, but rather speaks to the nature of the opportunity of daily life to live in a manner that pleases God.⁴³ Paul was interested in creating a clear separation of practice of the believers in Ephesus from the sinful behaviors of the culture in which they were ministering.⁴⁴ This is shown in the final phrase of the verse, *hoti ai emera i ponera i eisin*, translated simply as “because the days are evil.”⁴⁵

Theological Explanation and Commentary

Paul knows that the battle for the Christian walk begins with a solid cognitive foundation. Second Peter 1 affirms this as it mentions the “knowledge of God” or “knowing” truth six times Peter instructed his churches to rest on the foundation of God’s truth to ground them through trials. Paul’s emphasis here is pertinent not only for those believers in Ephesus, but also for today’s church. Christians are called to apply knowledge and wisdom to their daily life and decision making, to pay great attention and care in how they choose to live their Christian life and with great wisdom, and to count each second of every day as an opportunity to redeem that moment for eternal blessing and reward through obedience to Christ and a shunning of the world’s evil system. The theology is simple and straightforward, but it takes a full-fledged mental, emotional, and spiritual commitment to conform to the image of Christ. Paul gave a list of imperative commands in chapter 5 of Ephesians that pave the way for Christians to live in a manner worthy of their calling. Pastors, disciplers, and biblical counselors would be wise to call every believer to put these commands into practice in order to produce righteous fruit.

⁴²Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 318–19.

⁴³Eadie, *Commentary on the Greek Text of Ephesians*, 392.

⁴⁴Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 353.

⁴⁵Eadie, *Commentary on the Greek Text of Ephesians*, 394.

Concluding Thoughts

Ephesians 5:15–16 condense for the reader the wisdom that Paul instructed in Ephesians 4 and 5. The young Christian of today must be a watchful one. He must watch how he conducts himself in this world so as to remove himself completely from any evil influence that would seek to supplant the truth of God’s word in his heart. Paul calls on all believers to live wisely, to redeem the time, to not waste a moment in living for the glory of God, and to commit oneself to a disciplined life of godliness.

The Disciplined Man of 1 Timothy & 2 Timothy

One of the best examples of instructions for godly living given to a young man in the NT is Paul’s instruction to his spiritual son, Timothy. Paul passed down many points of instruction to Timothy, but the focus of this study will look at a few select passages, namely 1 Timothy 4:7 and 2 Timothy 2:22. The content of these verses will give principled instruction that will speak directly to the issues in which the EA community finds themselves entangled.

Background and Context

First Timothy was a letter that Paul wrote to Timothy as he was laying the foundations of his pastoral ministry in the city of Ephesus. It was penned shortly after Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment (ca. AD 62–64). Second Timothy was written during Paul’s second Roman imprisonment and shortly before his death (ca. AD 66–67) and was given for the purpose of Paul’s final instructions for Timothy’s ministry before his execution.⁴⁶ Timothy was a young ministry partner of Paul’s who was left in charge of the Ephesian church in order to help give leadership and set the church in spiritual order.⁴⁷ The ministry context was already described in the previous section on

⁴⁶MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1810.

⁴⁷William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 7–8.

Ephesians 5, so it can be said with certainty that the instruction Timothy received can also be seen as relevant in today's Western church context.

Exegesis

Much of what is directly pertinent to this discussion can be found in principle in these two passages. The simple, foundational imperatives from these two should serve the conversation between the counselor and counselee well.

1 Timothy 4:7. *Tous de bebelous kai graowdes muthows paraitou.* The translation of this passage can be rendered, "But refuse the irreverent and silly myths."⁴⁸ This is the first half of the verse and the *put off* section of this instruction. Timothy was instructed to ignore the gnostic and pseudo-gospel teaching that was prevalent among Ephesian false teachers. He was instead called to *gumnadze de seauton pros eusebeian*, or, "rather, train yourself for godliness."⁴⁹ In the same way that an athlete who was competing in Olympic games would train (*gumnadze*, or "go to the gym"), Timothy was to view his spiritual disciplines in the same manner, putting his mind through rigorous training in godly behavior by knowing, loving, and practicing God's truth. In essence, he was to exercise his godliness in order to become more godly.⁵⁰

2 Timothy 2:22. Lenski renders this passage, "Now, the youthful lusts keep on fleeing, but keep pursuing righteousness, faith, love, peace, in company with those

⁴⁸This translation is rendered from the Mounce Reverse-Interlinear NT found in Accordance Bible Software. It seems to best capture the tenor of Paul's instruction to avoid becoming entangled in the pointless and godless speculation of secular philosophy and of the Ephesian heresy issues that were manifest in the church. Though the Ephesian heresy is not directly defined in the text, it is clear from this instruction that the church was facing issues of either Jewish mysticism or proto-gnostic teachings infiltrating the church. For more on this, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, lxix–lxxxiv.

⁴⁹Translated also from the Mounce Reverse-Interlinear NT in Accordance Bible Software. The translation is straightforward and requires no special understanding of any nuance of Greek that is missing in the English translation.

⁵⁰Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 197.

calling upon the Lord from a clean heart.”⁵¹ Lenski also rightly notes the chiasmic structure that places strong emphasis on the contrasting nature of the verbal actions.⁵² Timothy was to continually “keep on fleeing youthful lusts,” while at the same time “keep pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace.” Paul’s qualifier notes that these things are to be pursued in the context of Christian fellowship, and by contrast, those things pursued outside of their proper context (i.e., in the fellowship and for the purpose of love and service to others) render themselves neutered as works of righteousness since the call is to perform these acts with a clear conscience toward God and in the context of ministry and fellowship with like-minded Christians.⁵³

Theological Explanation and Commentary

In 1 Timothy 4:7, Paul gives Timothy both a negative and a positive imperative in this verse, both a “put off” and a “put on.” The first command for Timothy establishes a disciplined pattern of behavior that rejects pointless discussions not rooted in the absolute truth of divine revelation and instructs him to de-clutter his mind of humanistic nonsense. Lenski states, “Paul’s advice is sound psychology. People who are fanatical in regard to some silly religious matter desire nothing more than to have you argue with them. To do so is to leave the wrong impression as though the matter is worth discussion and argument. That encourages their folly.”⁵⁴ For Timothy to engage in such discussions, or even to entertain these debates in the same breath as the preaching of the word of God is to give validation to their discussion when in reality they are not even worth mentioning. Timothy’s job was not to *disprove* the false teachers, but live as an

⁵¹Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles*, 811.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 764–65.

⁵⁴Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles*, 630.

example of the wisdom of God’s true revelation through faithful preaching and in his own self-discipline and sanctification in spiritual matters.⁵⁵

The nature of the world in which emerging adults function promotes seemingly endless speculation due to the postmodernism’s relativistic nature of truth and discourse.⁵⁶ Paul’s wisdom for Timothy, though it is geared toward his role in leadership, is a an example for all young men to mimic. Christians are not to entangle themselves in the false godless philosophy and myths of anti-realist thought, engaging them on a level that gives them credence or validity in the spiritual realm, but instead are to live how Paul lived in 2 Corinthians 5, as ambassadors for Christ, pleading for unbelievers to be reconciled to God.

The instruction of 2 Timothy 2:22 proves exceptionally relevant to the life and thought patters of EA. A godly man, particularly a young man seeking godly behavior, is to seek wisdom from God on how to live. He is to study God’s word and to exercise any and all commands for godly living. In the case of this verse, both negative and positive commands must be obeyed. Timothy (as an example for all believers) was to actively flee youthful lusts, while at the same time actively pursue righteous deeds, love, and faith, in the context of true Christian fellowship.⁵⁷ The easiest way to gauge a lifestyle choice is to see if the choice conforms to these negative and positive commands and whether the choice will cause a response that mimic’s Timothy, or one that mimics, as Mounce states, “Those whose hearts are not cleansed and whose behavior is contradictory to these virtues.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 244.

⁵⁶The influence of postmodernity and coherence views of truth on the millennial generation were well established in chap. 2. For a greater study on the topic, see Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), particularly the chapters entitled “Morality Adrift” and “Civic and Political Disengagement.”

⁵⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 544–45.

⁵⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 533.

Concluding Thoughts

Paul's letters to Timothy are some of the clearest instruction given for young men to live lives that are obedient and pleasing to God. In 1 Timothy 4:12 Paul commands that Timothy's life serve as an example of godliness beyond his years, thus winning people over to his leadership and to follow him in godliness. In the same manner that the Corinthian church was called to "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1) the Ephesian church members were to follow Timothy's example set through his self-discipline, his desire to live in a manner that pleases God, and his fulfillment of the roles that God had designed for him. Likewise, young men in the church can look to the example of Timothy as a unique ministry model. He should be seen as a godly young man who was given instruction for traversing the transitional phase of life from youth to maturity by putting off worldly desires, youthful lusts, and foolish myths and false doctrine, while putting on godly self-discipline, true faith, righteousness, love, peace, and genuine Christian fellowship. These tools of sanctification served Timothy well, and they too can serve any young man of God who desires to be obedient to God's design of masculine maturity, and the pursuit thereof.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined several NT texts for the purpose of building a foundational understanding of godly masculine behavior. Through the study and application of the principles and imperatives given in these passages, one can build a picture of what is expected of men of God who aim to live obedient and successful Christian lives. The principles and imperatives presented in this chapter, as well as the preceding chapter, will be taken in the direction of application and instruction in order to build a functional paradigm for biblical counselors who are engaged (or who will at some time be engaged) in counseling and/or discipleship of young EA men in the church. These young men must be instructed to build their worldview and understanding of their God-given roles and functional designs in the church and home from these core texts.

Beyond these passages lies an ocean of biblical wisdom waiting to be employed, but every counselee must begin with a solid foundation. These core passages will help them establish that foundation, upon which they can build their mature godly lives.

CHAPTER 5
A COUNSELING PARADIGM FOR EMERGING
ADULTS AND BIBLICAL MASCULINITY

The previous chapters of this thesis have brought the study to a reckoning point. With the background and foundation of EA laid in chapter two, and with the biblical examples and imperatives for masculine maturity explored in chapters three and four, it is now necessary to present a paradigm for biblical counselors in their approach to the counseling of EA men under their care.

Utilizing the same socio-economic structures presented in chapter two, this chapter will explore a biblical approach to lifestyle and choices that emerging adults face by looking at each of the major descriptives of EA presented by Christian Smith in *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*, namely the dramatic growth of higher education, the delay of marriage, the changes in the American economy that undermine the stability of the workforce, the increasing number of parents who extend financial support to emerging adults and the increasing length of time that help is offered, reliable technologies of birth control, and the influence of poststructuralism and postmodernism on the U.S. culture's understanding of morality and truth claims.¹ Additionally, Arnett's categorical descriptives for EA (identity exploration, instability, self-focus, a feeling of "in between," and unparalleled possibilities for direction and transformation in life) will be incorporated into the discussion.

¹Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13–16.

Structure and Approach of the Paradigm

The paradigm presented in this chapter consists of four parts: First, the counselor must understand the nature of the world of EA. Fortunately for the reader, this was accomplished in chapter two. Second, the counselor must lay aside any preconceived cultural notions of masculinity or manhood and focus on the pure biblical instruction of the texts presented in chapters three and four. According to these foundational verses, masculinity has nothing to do with western American cultural conventions like growing a beard, chopping down trees, killing and grilling your own dinner, arm-wrestling, or dominating in sports (none of which are morally bad, of course, just none of which define what it means to be masculine!). In the laying aside of any notions not mandated by God for masculinity, any personal preference, experience, or desired outcome will necessarily become subordinate to the *purposes of God's Word* for masculinity and godly maturity. No longer should there exist a generational divide between mature men and young men. All Christian men are of the same kind and in the same family! The purpose of the mature man must not be to chide the young man based in generational differences or preferences, but rather to spur him on (Heb 10:24) toward godly maturity first through the understanding of biblical wisdom, and then the employment of that wisdom in the context the young man's life.

Building on that mentality, the third part of the process involves introducing godly wisdom to the counselee in its pure and bare form. The text must be introduced, explained, given context, and shown to be a timeless representation of God's purpose and path for every young man, regardless of context. In fact, it will be helpful even to show the difficult backgrounds and cultural situations that the original audience faced in order to show that today's modern culture is neither the most difficult to navigate, nor is it the most immoral of all previous generations (Eccl 1:9).

The fourth and final part involves working one-on-one with the counselee to then employ this wisdom in a manner that addresses each of the categories and conditions

of EA, as well as the behavioral tendencies of EA and force them to address each in the newly instructed light of Scripture. The implications of this final step may or may not include a radical life change, but it will, at minimum, employ the process that Adams put forth in *How to Help People Change* from 1 Timothy 3: namely teaching, conviction, correction, and disciplined training in righteousness.² When all four parts are employed, they allow for a relational counseling structure that maintains a high view of Scripture and an appropriate attitude of Christ-centered service toward godliness and masculine maturity between the generations.

Employing the Paradigm in Categories for Counsel

The following categories were presented in chapter two as those overarching socio-economic structures where emerging adults function and in which they find themselves faced with an abundance of decisions. Those decisions often reflect the aforementioned defining characteristics of EA as presented by Smith and Arnett. Here they will be confronted with biblical wisdom under each structure below in order to provide the biblical counselor with a foundational structure of wisdom, as well as a background worldview understanding of EA when discussing these structures with their counselees.

Education and the Workplace

Smith notes that the first notable contributing factor of EA is the dramatic expanse of higher education. As a quick note of reminder, it is important to acknowledge that the availability of college and the EA mentality of the pursuit of higher education have several reasons. Smith gives several of these reasons as the establishment of the G.I. bill, the instability of the American workplace due to economic changes, government

²Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 13.

subsidization of community colleges, and the need (or perceived need) for graduate and post-graduate education in order to be a voice of influence in society.³ Recognition of the majority of these as extrinsic factors (inherent to the society, not the individual) is paramount in the gathering of background information and context on an EA counselee. This category offers ample opportunity for biblical counselors to compare the counselee's circumstances with their own, or rather what would be considered normative for their own generation. One must take care not to engage in such comparisons. It has already been demonstrated that socio-economic conditions are different for today's high school graduate considering either college or graduate education than it was in any precursor generation of the post-industrial age.⁴ This is not said to excuse any behavioral characteristics that are unbiblical, but rather to set a context for understanding the reasoning behind decisions.

With a proper understanding of the reasons behind the Millennial generation's drive toward post-high school education, the biblical counselor must approach this topic in discussion from a perspective of practical biblical wisdom. That statement may seem oversimplified, but without it counseling can easily become a pragmatic system of do's and don'ts whose final aim is for a practical rather than a spiritual outcome.

In the practice of part one of the paradigm, it is important to note several factors. First, as noted, the expansion of higher education is not merely a preferential choice for these young people, but choice does come into play. Though graduate school has become more of a standardized way to find success in the business world, Arnett's

³Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 13.

⁴This is not a deterministic statement regarding the behavior or decision-making of emerging adults. Rather, it is stated to cause the biblical counselor to think critically and wisely about circumstance, individual journey experience, and sociological trends in general. Each generation faces a unique set of challenges and circumstances, and each generation will then build a lens of experience through which they view subsequent generations. The role of the counselor in this circumstance is to understand the background information of EA. This will allow for a comprehensive and wholistic approach to soul care that removes assumptions, preferences, and cultural background differences while focusing purely on the text of Scripture applied to relational counsel and discipleship.

noticed trends of self-focus, instability, and a wide range of possibilities for future educational and work outcomes can be major contributing factors for emerging adults as they change majors or start and stop various career paths in their search for which educational and career path will best fit their formulated identity.⁵ Instead of focusing on a career that can support oneself or a family unit, young men often look for a career opportunity that is exciting, creatively fulfilling, or leads to a life of relative ease.⁶ Though this is not inherently a bad thing, when it serves as a detriment to the calling of man to be a worker, provider, and diligent servant of family, then gospel sense must prevail through wise counsel.

Education must be a servant that meets a need. Endless and aimless higher education that does not have the purpose of career execution is childish. Maturity calls a man to train for what he needs, such as training in righteousness, training for battle, training for athletics, and training for vocation. This training, particularly in the realm of education, must serve a purpose, and that purpose should be to help attain a goal of life vocation. Phillips notes on masculine roles of work, “The point of Genesis 2:8 is that God put man into the Garden, into the world of Covenantal relationships and duties, in order to gain and act out his God-given identity there [as a worker].”⁷ Man exists in a context, with roles, and his life purpose is to work out how to fulfill those roles. Doing so takes a plan. As Zig Ziglar once said, “If you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it every time.”⁸

⁵Though not a direct quote, this idea comes from the general statement of Arnett that most young people now spend the majority of their twenties trying out various career paths and seeking out success in those paths through experimentation in higher education. For more on this idea, see Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: What Is It, and What Is It Good For?” *Society for Research in Child Development* 1, no. 2 (February, 2007): 68.

⁶For a more detailed perspective on these statements, see Susan Littwin, *The Postponed Generation: Why American Youth are Growing Up Later* (New York: Quill/William Morrow, 1986), specifically the chapters “Artists and Dreamers” and “Santa Cruz as a State of Mind.”

⁷Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God’s Calling to Men* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2010), 7.

⁸Tom Ziglar, “If You Aim at Nothing . . .,” October 7, 2016, ziglar.com, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://www.ziglar.com/articles/aim-nothing-3/>.

Though it may be tempting for a counselor to tell a young man, “Man up! Get a practical job,” that kind of counsel often falls on deaf ears. The practical considerations of the previous generations are not the same as today, thus it is also a moot point. It would be wise, rather, for the counselor to point the young man to the nature of wisdom regarding industry and education as found in Scripture. The base principles found in the texts of chapter 4 of this thesis will ground the counselee in foundational wisdom, but it is necessary to relate the concepts of wise industrial living to deeper or more specific principles.⁹ The goal is not to counsel them away from what the counselor might perceive as wishful dreams or simple creative fulfillment, but rather to see if the purposes behind those pursuits are godly and rooted in any sort of actual ability. If the counselee shows incredible promise in music, for example, then they should be counseled toward the pursuit of a career in that field if they so desire! The counselor must encourage them to boldly take risks! Dan Dumas states:

Life will confront you with a million opportunities to ‘run into a burning building.’ If you live with your eyes open, you’ll see one situation after another where something needs to be done, where someone could use some help, or where something needs to be said. Risk-takers will capitalize on those opportunities to help others and address the problem. We want to pursue that kind of risk-taking.¹⁰

He is speaking of life in general, but this mentality does well when entering the workforce or searching for a career. There is no need to settle for boring or non-defining careers. There is plenty of excitement and success to be had in the workforce.

However, wisdom must prevail if they lack the talent or drive to compete and be (to continue the example) a successful musician. Thus, a counselor should then help

⁹For example, the foundational understanding of Paul’s imperatives for masculine maturity studied in chap. 4 will establish that man is to be sensible and level-headed (Titus 2), singularly focused in his faith to God (Jas 1, 4), courageous in the defense of faith (1 Cor 16), and spiritually and vocationally disciplined (1 and 2 Tim). Building on these foundations, a counselor can take a young man deeper into more nuanced studies of Proverbs 1–7, show that work was created as a divine institution (Gen 2:15), warning against quick money-making schemes (Prov 12:11), and the nature of working for the glory of God (Col 3:23).

¹⁰Dan Dumas, *Live Smart: Preparing for the Future God Wants for You* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2016), 83.

direct him toward a more concrete decision on a practical vocation or a vocation that will serve the purpose of fulfilling work as well as financially viable. That will help to set a path forward and allow them to choose an academic road that will accomplish that goal.

The job of the counselor, then, in the discussion of education and work related decisions is as follows: understand the socio-economic constraints that drive emerging adults toward continued higher education, lay aside any personal or past generational understandings of practicality while instead employing foundational godly wisdom from Scripture that shows the functional role of a man as a worker. Then, bring that wisdom to the counselee in a way that will constructively draw him toward a decision based in godly biblical wisdom for their future in education and the workplace. Gibson writes,

A mentor, focusing on the area of academics, simply committing to partner with an emerging adult mentee for the process of post-secondary experience can pay huge dividends for the young adult. Dividends such as aiding in clear thinking concerning the right path for career readiness, completing college in a timely fashion, and a host of other critical issues during the college years are the payoffs intergenerational mentoring produces. As the mentor comes alongside the emerging adult to lend guidance and wisdom as they need it through their four years or so as a college student, this process lends significant contribution to the emerging adult's life.¹¹

It is not the role of the counselor to choose a path for the counselee, but to illuminate the truth of God's word, serve as a wise counselor who gives instruction on a man's role as provider for his family and a worker for God's glory, and to help direct the counselee toward a decision to that end.

Family Relationships

A great emphasis was placed on wise approaches to counsel in discussions of education and work choices because those tend to be determinative on how and when emerging adults begin to think about family structures like marriage and raising children. With a foundation laid for counsel in wise decision-making in those areas, it is now

¹¹Barry James Gibson, "Emerging Adults and the Elusiveness of Commitment" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 106–7.

appropriate to look into the nature of family relationships, both in the present context (relationships to parents) and in their future context as they move toward building their own family.

Relationships with parents. The main reason that Deuteronomy 5:16a was included in chapter 3 is that a defining characteristic of EA shows a number of emerging adults are still either living in their parent's home or are receiving a substantial amount of financial support from their parents (thus, the discussion will be restricted to this issue).¹² The nature of this extension of help with its benefits and detriments could be debated one way or the other, but the focus of this study will only highlight the facts, not the moral implications (those will be left to the discretion of the parents and the heart attitude of the counselee). The purpose of this passage is to demonstrate that the honor brought to parents is honor that is demonstrable, or visible and characteristic of one's life. In other words, wasting one's life on pointless endeavors (video games on the couch in the parent's basement comes to mind) does not show parents honor. If parents are, as has become normative in this generation, extending financial support to youth in transition to adulthood, it is the responsibility of those youth to utilize those funds to bring honor to their parents according to Deuteronomy 5:16a.¹³

How, then, can this honor be given? Practical wisdom would dictate that their money should not be wasted, but rather invested into future avenues for success and return on that investment. Rainer and Rainer note that the perspective of the parents in

¹²R. Schoeni and K. Ross, "Material Assistance Received from Families during the Transition to Adulthood," in *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*, ed. R. A. Settersten Jr., F. F. Furstenberg Jr., and R. G. Rumbaut (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 396-416.

¹³The corpus of writing on EA tends to focus on the observable trends and defining characteristics of EA as opposed to presenting (particularly in a Christian context) wise counsel on how to respond (particularly, biblically) to those defining features. Since a major characteristic of EA is the extension of continued financial support of parents to children, it is important to discuss a biblical worldview on how to respond to this phenomenon. Unfortunately, not much (if anything) has been written to offer sound advice, particularly in a counseling setting addressing emerging adults. For this reason, it must suffice that this statement is based in biblical wisdom rather than in published works.

offering more financial support is that their child will have a more competitive advantage in the workplace and will most likely land a more competitive paying job.¹⁴ For this reason, since the parents are the ones making the investment, the young person should seek to fulfill their parents' outcome of using this money to further their education for the purpose of finding a better job. In doing so, they will bring honor to their parents.

The relationship of parents to emerging adults, specifically the nature of dependency, should be temporary. As the emerging adult moves toward completion of education and enters the workforce, that safety net should be drawn back and that influence should wane as the financial help will have served its purpose.

Relationships with spouses and children. So much of what is written with regard to EA focuses on the nature of sexual expression and exploration among emerging adults. Sexual freedom and experience has become a normal and almost expected part of the human development. This is no surprise to the Christian and definitely not to the biblical counselor. Romans 1 states that men reject the truth evident to them about God, as clearly seen in nature, and they do so in order to continue following their degraded passions and sexual lusts. But to explain why this is, Galatians 5:19 and Ephesians 4:19 teach that when men give themselves over to their own lusts, the results are sexual immorality, impurity, and lustful pleasures. Furthermore, Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 that the sexually immoral and those who practice homosexuality will not inherit the kingdom of God. To be sure, this is a serious and consequential discussion, not to be taken lightly.

The reason for discussing this defining characteristic of EA here foundationally is given in Deuteronomy 5:18 and was expounded on in chapter 3. God's law commands that no man commit adultery. The NT helps expand the view of that

¹⁴Thomas Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 20.

command to any and all forms of sexual immorality, sexually abhorrent behavior, or lustful passions that, as Peter teaches in 1 Peter 2:11, “Wage war against the flesh.” The fight against sexual immorality is a war against fleshly desires and personal sexual preference, and that war, for the emerging adult believer, is fought for the soul of marriage and for the preservation of the Christian family unit.

The counselor’s hope can be found in the fact that emerging adults, at large, value the institutions of marriage and of the family, and through a misguided and immoral thought process have come to the conclusion that sexual exploration and the gathering of sexual experiences will actually help when it comes to a marriage commitment.¹⁵ The problem lies with the subjective morality of both MTD and postmodern anti-realist, subjectivist, and relativistic thought. These three elements of Postmodern thought will be explored later in the chapter, but the defining features of MTD show that though God created the world and watches over it, he is relatively disconnected from any moral influence and simply desires people to be nice to each other and to strive after happiness and fulfillment. This thought process, Mohler notes, is largely pervasive in American evangelical Christianity among those who are simply churched or are merely culturally or historically Christian by heritage.¹⁶ The danger here is that emerging adult men in the church, without proper corrective instruction, will default to this line of thinking in their sexual ethic.

Once this dichotomy is understood, the goal will be to bring the true instruction of Scripture to bear and to correct wrong thinking about sexuality outside of

¹⁵Though a simplified expression of the morality of sexuality in emerging adulthood, the statement holds true. For a more detailed study on the nature of sex, sexual exploration, and views of marriage, see Eva S. Lefkowitz and Meghan M. Gillen, “Sex Is Just a Normal Part of Life,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 235–55.

¹⁶R. Albert Mohler, “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: The New American Religion,” April 18, 2005, Christian Post, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion-6266/>.

marriage while then confronting the culture at large along with the counselee in order to show the difference between the world's failing morality and the truth of God's requirements for sexual purity as found in His Word. Timothy's example can be seen, as shown by Andrew Gutierrez, in fervent prayer, keeping the gospel at the forefront of the mind, finding strength in true Christian fellowship, and, as chapter four taught, boldly and faithfully resisting the temptation as if his spiritual life depended on it. Timothy fought for holiness and purity as an example for all men of God to follow.¹⁷

Emerging adult young men must be shown biblical examples of godly maturity as both husbands and fathers. Stuart Scott speaks to one of the defining features of biblical masculinity as being a godly husband. He notes first, "As creator and ruler of this world and everything in it, God is the one who has the perfect plan for marriage . . . it is through his role that the husband exemplifies Christ to his wife, his family, and the world."¹⁸ He continues by expounding on Ephesians 5:25 and showing how a husband's role is to sacrificially give himself up in service to his wife, and he is called to *continually* do this.¹⁹ The counselor must demonstrate through biblical truth and example that, though humans are sexual creatures, even in marriage there is not sexual freedom in the sense of pure self-indulgence and self-satisfaction. The goal is to live in service to one-another and submitting to each other's needs. Scott also notes that marriage, though designed for sexual satisfaction, that this satisfaction must only be found in the confines of the marriage covenant and should be given out of a spirit of mutual care and love.²⁰

¹⁷Andrew Gutierrez, "Real Men Flee Temptation: Lessons from the Life of Timothy," in *Men of the Word: Insights for Life from Men Who Walked with God*, ed. Nathan Busenitz (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2011), 73–80.

¹⁸Stuart Scott, *Biblical Manhood: Masculinity, Leadership, and Decision Making* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2009), 23.

¹⁹Ibid., 28–30.

²⁰Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective*, rev. ed. (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2002), 66–68.

Finally, the family unit is intended to be filled with children (should the Lord allow). In Genesis 2:25, God commands the man and woman, “Be fruitful and multiply” and Ephesians 5 and 6 give family instructions for fathers to love their children by raising them in the fear and discipline of the Lord. Part of the great commission is for families to live the truths of the gospel through having a respectable household that mirrors the love of God, the social order of God, and the fruit of the Spirit manifest in obedient lives of love and selfless giving to others. One way that counselors can alleviate any concern or worry about future child rearing for these young men counselees (or one way to put the fear of God in them) is to instruct them of their simple and straightforward role found in Ephesians 6:4. As Melvin Dirkse comments, “In obeying God’s command to bring up children in the ‘training and admonition of the Lord,’ the parents’ primary task is to help their children recognize the one true God and learn that He is sovereign over everything and everyone.”²¹ Remembering this simple and yet monumental task will also help the counselee to steer their children away from the false morality of the world that they may have fallen into, and to help guide them toward an exclusive lifestyle of biblical godliness.

Wise counsel will go a long way to fighting off the immoral worldview of MTD and emerging adulthood-at-large that expects and promotes sexual freedom and exploration, even if those views have at their hearts a *moral* cause of preserving marriage through prior sexual experience. Knowing that background, though, will help the counselor think wisely about the prevailing worldview and battle that worldview directly with godly wisdom from Scripture that will help to set the emerging adult counselee on the correct path toward righteous relationships.

²¹Melvin Dirkse, “Parenting Your Children as a Father,” in *Men Counseling Men: A Biblical Guide to the Major Issues Men Face*, ed. John Street (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 235.

Religion and Spirituality

A person's sexual ethic will tell you a lot about their views on religion and spirituality. The God of the Bible has clearly given standards of sexual morality and expectations, based on his perfect design for marriage, sex, and procreation. Despite unambiguous biblical instruction, the world has distorted biblical truth and created its own versions of morality, even under the guise of Christianity. In order to be firmly rooted in righteous behavior and for any godly change to take hold, emerging adults in the church must abandon any of these false systems of works righteousness or custom-tailored morality and must be faithful to both Christ and Scripture. The prevailing morality of emerging adulthood, as previously shown, is Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Awareness of MTD. It is not necessary to spend much time here other than to impress on the counselor the prevailing nature of MTD in the world of EA. This term, however, is not a term that most emerging adults know or would claim for themselves. Rather, when Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton surveyed a wide sample of adolescent teens and young adults, they formulated a “de facto creed” that represents the vast majority of religious and spiritual views of American youth.²²

The tenets of the de facto creed have already been stated in chapter 3, but the basic premise involves a God who created and watches over the universe, who wants people to be generally good, who desires that all people find happiness in life, who is not particularly involved in daily life unless needed to help solve a problem, and who grants heaven as a reward to generally good people.²³ Smith also notes that one of the reasons that his sample subjects chose their religion or choose to adhere to this creed is because it makes them feel good, proving that MTD is a worldview that allows emotions to dictate

²²Christian Smith, “On ‘Moralistic Therapeutic Deism’ as U.S. Teenager’s Actual, Tacit, and De Facto Religious Faith,” *Religion and Youth* (2010): 46–57.

²³*Ibid.*, 46–47.

knowledge and actions and is flawed from a biblical perspective.²⁴ The scriptural paradigm for godly living has true knowledge as a foundation that controls the hearts affections and the person's choices and actions.

Though not a treatise on MTD, it is important for the counselor to be aware of this dominant moral construct in EA. The Christian emerging adult already has an uphill battle for grasping biblical morality since the culture around them has corrupted truth so greatly. Thus, the biblical expositions found in chapters three and four should serve the counselor well as a way to help reestablish foundational morals, godly practice, and masculine expectations for godly Christian men.

Spiritual identity formation. The practice of spiritual disciplines is paramount for the Christian man as he is formulating his spiritual identity. A great deal of the academic writing on the topic of EA speaks to the nature of identity formation in young adults, specifically the ontogenesis of *identity capital* (self-awareness and self-discipline) and *developmental individualization* (personalized development based on liberating possibilities).²⁵ These ideas have positive offerings to the emerging adult, but questions are begged: to what end is one seeking individualized development? And what self-disciplines are being cultivated?

R. Kent Hughes notes that Paul is calling for “spiritual sweat” in 1 Timothy 4:7. This is a good way to think about it. True godliness takes work. Just as athleticism requires a workout of the body, true Christian practice requires a workout of the spiritual

²⁴Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), the work as a whole speaks to this construct. The human heart has cognitive capabilities, affections, and volitional drive. When the system is not subordinated properly, the individual's life becomes dysfunctional. Pierre builds a paradigm for counseling the dynamics of the human heart, building a pan-scriptural model for the subordination of the affections to the cognitive truths of God's word, which will then produce volitional obedience to God's word. For more on this, see Pierre's dynamic heart model in chap. 1.

²⁵James Côté, “Emerging Adulthood as an Institutional Moratorium: Risks and Benefits to Identity Formation,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 92.

disciplines.²⁶ The counselor must call for and expect “spiritual sweat” from their young emerging adult counselees calling them to godly action and godly discipline. If one wants to think about godly *identity capital*, then the foundational wisdom presented in chapters three and four is a good place to start. A Christian man must realize his role and purpose, he must be sensitive to and hate his sin, he must seek to obey God’s law, he must be level-headed and sensible, he must be singularly-minded in his pursuit of Christ, he must be a man of courageous faith who carefully walks in righteousness, and disciplined for good works. Once that kind of *identity capital* can be established, then *developmental individualization* will be constrained by godly wisdom and the path will straighten.

An excellent resource for the counselor is *Practicing Proverbs: Wise Living for Foolish Times* by Richard Mayhue.²⁷ This work spells out the purpose of the Book of Proverbs as the textbook for wisdom, authorized by God himself. Mayhue labors to place every single proverb into categories for application in godly living. Though there are too many to broach in this work, this resource provides foundational wisdom, and perhaps even some homework assignments, for any area of life that may need counsel.

The goal, then, is for the counselor to stick to the script, go to the Word of God, and expound it for practical and applicable truth for living. Spiritual formations cannot be left to cultural devices, rather they must be harnessed and determined by God’s prescribed will for godly masculine maturity exercised in daily life. A counselee who commits to this path will not fail in reaching this goal, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Anti-Realism, Relativism, and Subjectivism

Postmodernism as a philosophical framework was formulated primarily as a

²⁶R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 10th anniversary ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 14.

²⁷Richard Mayhue, *Practicing Proverbs: Wise Living for Foolish Times* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003), 29–40.

rejection of modernism, and thus serves as a rejection of modernist naturalistic realism as well as certain socio-political, metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical frameworks.²⁸ However, postmodernism also has developed certain reactionary positions of anti-realism, subjectivism, and relativism. Because postmodernism serves to umbrella a large number of studies, it is necessary to discuss relevant issues related to postmodern studies and how those issues change the discussion for life and belief among emerging adults. Anti-realism serves as a rejection of realism and focuses on the nature of external reality being a hypothetical truth and not an assumed fact,²⁹ while subjectivism and relativism speak to the nature of truth claims and reality being subject to individual perspectives and points of view. Truth, then, is not a universal framework.³⁰ As postmodernism is discussed in general, *these principles* will be more specifically what is being discussed. Christian Smith defines the cultural effect of these postmodern phenomena in this way:

The 1980s and 1990s saw the widespread diffusion and powerful influence of the theories of poststructuralism and postmodernism in the U.S. culture. These began as arcane academic theories among French literary critics, professors of linguistics and literature, and other scholars in the humanities. Soon however, they spread and were popularized in most of the humanities and some of the social sciences in U.S. colleges and universities. All that belonged to ‘the modern’ was condemned: epistemological foundations, certainty, reason, universalism, the self, authorial voice, the nation state, colonialism, the Word, etc. All that was thought to be postmodern was celebrated: uncertainty, difference, fluidity, ambiguity, multivocality, self-construction, changing identities, particularity, historical finitude, localism, audience reception, perspectivalism, and more By the time it reached the American hoi polloi, postmodernism had become a simple-minded ideology presupposing the cultural construction of everything, individualistic subjectivism, soft ontological anti-realism, and absolute moral relativism. All of this is very evident in emerging adult culture as well.³¹

Though that may seem like a mish-mash of psychological terms, what Smith identifies

²⁸Stephen Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* (Tempe, AZ: Scholarly Publishing, 2004), 15.

²⁹Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 24.

³⁰Maria Baghramian and Carter J. Adams, “Relativism,” September 11, 2015, Stanford.edu, accessed July 17, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/>.

³¹Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 15.

here is critical to the understanding of emerging adulthood. This worldview existing behind EA has replaced epistemological foundations with ambiguity. No longer will the world affirm absolute truth, like the absolute truth that the church preaches every Sunday from the Word of God, but rather truth is a relativistic venture. The lines have been drawn in the sand for the battle of truth and authority.

Individual meaning. Anti-realism, relativism, and subjectivism call upon individuals to give meaning to their reality, or to accept a plurality of meaning. When encountered with truth claims, the validity of those claims rests on the perception of the individual. Particularly in the area of religion, Regnerus and Uecker observe, “The arrival of postmodern, post-positive thought on university campuses has served to legitimize religiosity, even in intellectual circles. Together with heightened emphasis on religious tolerance, antireligious hostility may be at a decades-long low.”³² The importance of this quote should not be missed. Though they are speaking of open religious practice as a cultural positive, the nature and consequences of subjectivist relativistic thought are inconspicuous. The individual collegian now has the right to define what religious practices best suit their needs, thus absolute truth has been relegated. Thomas Bergler shows that emerging adults, “like to keep their options open and are careful to affirm that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion.”³³ This is now, as Smith stated, normal practice among emerging adults.

Biblical truth claims. The difference in worldview could not be more stark. The Bible makes truth claims based on its origin as *theopneustos*, breathed out by God Himself (2 Tim 3:16) and claiming the exclusive title of divine revelation, truth for life

³²Mark D. Regnerus and Jeremy E. Uecker, “How Corrosive is College to Religious Faith and Practice?,” *Maya*, 2007, SSRC Web Forum, accessed March 12, 2017, http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Regnerus_Uecker.pdf

³³Thomas Bergler, *From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 15.

and all that relates to godly character (2 Pet 1:3). Though most American Christians have heard this taught from Scripture (or can easily find it for themselves), many churches have abandoned biblical authority.

Bergler goes on to recognize in his following chapter the importance of recovering American Christianity from the grips of juvenilization through the process of becoming more Christ-like in the most revolutionary way, namely by returning to the text-based truths of Scripture.³⁴ The premise is so simple it is almost deafeningly profound. Rely on God's instruction for godly results. Aim at godliness with biblical precision and you'll hit it every time.

The opportunity for Christian contrast to these worldviews of postmodern elements in the context of emerging adulthood is ripe. Wise, godly Christians who can counsel young emerging adults in their congregations must boldly proclaim that God's truth is absolute and that its claims of power over sin and death, and God's power to save and sanctify are the surest things in this universe. Christians must learn again to rely on the profoundly simple roadmap for sanctification. That is, reliance upon God's word as the power to save and it begins with foundational truth for Christian living. For the purposes of this study, I would encourage the reader to begin with the expositions of the passages in chapters 3 and 4 when engaging young men in discussions of godly roles for masculine maturity.

The Role and Impetus of the Counselor

Now that the paradigm has been established for how biblical counselors should engage emerging adults in a counseling or discipleship relationship, it is important to define the practical roles that a counselor must adopt in order to build a close, working

³⁴Bergler, *From Here to Maturity*, 26–53. Bergler presents a similar paradigm to this thesis by showing that returning to the basics of Christian doctrine, applying biblical truth, striving for spiritual maturity will produce the results of becoming more Christ-like.

relationship with their EA counselee. The following four categories are offered as explicit functions that will help to bring the concepts into practical reality.

Patient Listener

One of the first things that biblical counselors are taught is to be good listeners. Listening well is one of the best ways to gather information about a counselee in order to gather the full background story before beginning a conversation about change. John Street says, “The best counsel comes from a man who takes the time to get to know his counselee well Knowing your counselee is extremely important, for that will enable you to apply the truths of the Bible in a meaningful and appropriate manner.”³⁵ Jay Adams titled the process “data gathering.” That is, acquiring as much background information and *halo data* as possible through the observance of what the counselee says, what they leave out, their body language, their mood and emotions, temperament, etc.³⁶ Most counselors will spend a good portion of the first session simply listening, gathering information, and beginning to build an assessment.

A helpful thing to remember when counseling emerging adult young men are that this generation tends to speak its mind self-confidently, self-focused, and sometimes narcissistically.³⁷ Though this can be misguided, it can be a good thing for counselors in the ease of gathering data. When listening to these confessions, remember to apply the background understandings of EA, both the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that help define this generation, and use that information to help make well-informed decisions for offering counsel. Listening comes first, and the generational divide between counselor

³⁵John Street, “Counseling Men with the Bible,” in *Men of the Word: A Biblical Guide to the Major Issues Men Face* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 55.

³⁶Most biblical counselors are familiar with this step in the first session of formal counseling, but for a direct approach for gathering data, see Jay Adams, *Critical Stages of Biblical Counseling: Getting Started, Breaking Through, Finishing Well* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 2012), 59–64.

³⁷Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* (New York: Atria Books, 2010), 18–19.

and counselee will require patience to pull it off well.

Wise Filter

Biblical wisdom is needed now more than ever. The counselee you will encounter will come to you with a myriad of worldly offerings of wisdom, with which they are attempting to define themselves and make sense out of their world.³⁸ During the process of listening and gathering data, a wise listener must catalogue all of the worldview perspectives brought by the counselee in order to both understand and refute them. Paul called Titus, as a minister of God's word, to "declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority." (Titus 2:15). The biblical counselor must be able to differentiate between a faulty Christian worldview and true biblical wisdom so as to reprove and correct errors that will inevitably come from this demographic.

Adams refers to both conviction and correction as necessary steps of the biblical counseling process. He says, "Conviction means bringing facts to bear upon a case so as to prove someone guilty of sin."³⁹ Adams is not merely speaking of a "gotcha" moment, but that this conviction is one that leads to true heart change and repentance in the knowledge that sin, error, or missing the mark before God has occurred. He also notes about correction, "It is the sense of 'standing something up' or 'making something to stand again'. . . . It is able to set straight what has been knocked off base or out of line."⁴⁰ When these two ideas are combined, a counselor's role is clear: bring sin to the attention of the counselee through conviction, and then follow up with the setting of things right by helping them stand righteously again. This approach serves the counselee as a wise filter.

³⁸Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: Understanding the New Way of Coming of Age," in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 7–14.

³⁹Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 118.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 139.

Faithful “Pray”er

No form of heart change or sanctification can occur without both the counselee and the counselor regularly exercising the spiritual act of prayer. Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew 6 to pray habitually, continually, and daily for all spiritual and material provision. Paul teaches that prayer should be a constant attitude and posture in both Ephesians 6:18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Prayer must saturate the Christian life, and it must be highly regarded and implemented in the counseling process.

Adams states that prayer is “the base” for Christian counseling, and that “the counselor should prepare for counseling *largely* by prayer for himself and for his counselee.”⁴¹ He continues, as he considers the example from James 5, “It is important to observe that prayer is one of the three determining factors in the counseling situation supposed by James As James indicates, prayer itself may be the essential element of the counseling process.”⁴²

Though it is easy to forget the power of prayer since one often does not see its immediate impact on a situation, God’s commands are clear. Prayer is to be at the center of all of Christian life, and counseling is no different. Counselors must take the time to pray before and after sessions with these young men. They must ask God to change their hearts, their perspectives, and their affections. They must ask God to shield them from wicked influence. They must ask God to instill conviction, a desire for change, and to implement lasting change for their sanctification. Being a faithful “pray”er will be the most effective thing that a counselor can do alongside faithfully adhering to the Word of God for wisdom and direction.

⁴¹Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 49.

⁴²Ibid.

Compassionate Mentor

Part of being a good biblical counselor is having the understanding of the human condition that the mind's perception of truth, of right and wrong, and of wisdom were all affected by the fall. Theologians call this the *noetic* effect of sin, or sin's effect on the mind.⁴³ Some of what has already been discussed is the need to bridge the generational gap that exists between counselors and counselees through intentional and relational counseling, and the understanding that comes from a biblically-based compassion for emerging adult men. But counselors must also have a posture of compassion that is reflective of God's character toward all sinners, knowing that sin distorts the mind and only through redemption and sanctification can this be undone. It should be the desire of the counselor to see these men come to maturity, to put off sinful tendencies, and to assume the mantle of their God-given roles as they compassionately counsel emerging adult young men to biblical change.

Jeremy Pierre speaks to the need for understanding how circumstances affect the relationship between the cognitive, affective, and volitional aspects of the heart's functions.⁴⁴ Outside factors and influences can have a dramatic effect on the perception of truth. Emerging adults are faced with worldview dilemmas at every turn. The Christian worldview is despised on college campuses, and Christians are often maligned for having an exclusive and intolerant perspective. Of course, this is no surprise to those who take refuge in Scripture. Second Timothy 3:1 says that in the last days there will be difficult times and men will be proud lovers of self, while Jesus pronounced blessing on all who would be reviled for his name's sake (Matt 5:11).

These are difficult times in which to be a Christian. The church should be a wellspring of instruction, worship, fellowship, and counsel, as well as a support structure

⁴³Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of How Sin Affects Our Thinking* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 3–5.

⁴⁴Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 164–76.

that helps to strengthen its people enough to face the world unscathed. Compassion and understanding from the counselor will go a long way toward securing a trusting and fruitful counseling relationship.

Building on a Biblical Foundation

Now that a paradigm has been offered for biblical counselors to engage emerging adult young men in formal counseling for the purpose of guiding them toward masculine maturity, it will also be important to direct them toward continued spiritual growth. Arnett notes that part of the goal of recognizing emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental life-phase was to help establish some thoughts as to how people will traverse it and become full-fledged, self-dependent functional adults in society.⁴⁵ But the goal for counselors is to encourage these young men to become mature men of faith, not self-dependent (as is the tendency of the generation), but rather reliant on both the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ for accountability and growth.

This thesis is entitled “The Church’s Masculine Maturity Crisis.” Part of the reason it was given this title, and part of the reason that emerging adults were chosen as the study group, is because this is where the crisis begins. The road to adulthood is paved with a multitude of bad counsel and unbiblical worldviews. The declining maturity of this generation must be caught early and must be corrected. An old Scottish proverb that has been translated colloquially into English says, “A miss by an inch is a miss by a mile.”⁴⁶ The proverb speaks to margin of error, and practically speaking when the point of biblical wisdom is off in one’s life, even by a seemingly insignificant amount, the practical results of that life will miss by a mile. When counselors can discover the errors in biblical understanding and wisdom early on, those dramatic life-defining errors can often be

⁴⁵Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 472–73.

⁴⁶Andrew Henderson, *Scottish Proverbs* (Albacraft, 2013), Kindle.

avoided. The goal, then, is to help correct the path now so that maturity can be a tangible goal, can be achieved, and the masculine maturity crisis that is looming over the American church, wherein the next generation of men are dramatically off target in their future preparations for assuming leadership roles in the church, can hopefully be averted. The final part of 2 Timothy 3:16–17 states that the word of God is profitable for “training in righteousness.” Wayne and Josh Mack say, “The Bible, when properly used, when meditated on, when applied to our lives, trains us. It changes our habits and patterns It will require continuous effort and struggle for a period of time.”⁴⁷ The road to righteous maturity is life-long, the effort must be life-long, and the discipleship and counsel must be life-long.

Conclusions

This study has looked at the looming issue of declining biblical masculine maturity in the American church and has offered biblical solutions to address the problem. The majority of the Millennial generation is facing a unique life-phase of development in emerging adulthood. This phase introduces them to some of the difficulties of the socio-economic situation they have inherited, as well it presents them with postmodern views of morality and a zeitgeist of self-focus, self-expression, and self-fulfillment in this life.

Through a generational study, the background and formation of emerging adulthood was given context. Emerging adults did not create this crisis, but the sociological structure is not going to solve the problem in the church. Biblical counselors must take notice of these young men in their churches and spheres of influence and begin to formalize discipleship, mentoring, or counseling relationships with them in order to help correct the faulty unbiblical thinking that is leading to prolonged youthful behavior,

⁴⁷Wayne A. Mack and Joshua Mack, *God's Solutions to Life's Problems: Radical Change by the Power of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014), 147.

sexual immorality, rejection of the absolute truth of Scripture, and ultimately the crumbling of personal Christian faith.

Foundational understandings of masculinity were explored through selected OT and NT texts that were chosen to help build a picture of masculine character and action. It is my hope that the material provided will be useful in helping to provide a foundational understanding of God's expectations for masculine maturity and faithfulness to God's calling for men, both in the church and in society.

If biblical counselors can utilize the four-part paradigm of understanding the world of EA, laying aside any preference toward generational or cultural understandings of masculinity, introduce the foundational instructions from Scripture toward masculine maturity, and help the emerging adult employ that wisdom in the context of their world, maturity will begin to prevail over immaturity in the lives of young men in our churches. Counselors must remember to do their jobs faithfully, as stewards of Christ, desiring the outcome of godly change both in the hearts and actions of these young men. The counselor must remember to listen patiently, to help them filter out the unwise and unbiblical advice they will get from the world, to pray for them faithfully, and to counsel compassionately. The counselor's example of godliness, like Paul's to Timothy, will bear righteous fruit and Christ will be glorified in the life of His church.

Directions for Future Research

The limits of research in this thesis are obvious: First, it was directed toward the study of emerging adulthood. Since this was a targeted study, particularly inside the Millennial generation, there will need to be continued studies of generational dynamics to see if this prolonged road to adulthood continues through subsequent generations. Second, this study was limited in scope to emerging adult young men in the church. For the purposes of this thesis, and with the discussion focusing on the looming masculine maturity crisis in the church (i.e., future leadership vacuum, inability to effectively lead,

etc.), it was necessary to do so. However, it would be beneficial to do a similar study on the spiritual formations of emerging adult young women in the church and discover how the developmental dynamic has both positively and negatively affected their spiritual condition. Third, this study was purposed to create a paradigm for biblical counselors to engage in counseling and discipleship relationships with these young men. Though this conversation did not cover every aspect of spiritual formation, and by nature it was more of a survey approach of the different constructs and worldview perspectives that shape the thinking, emotions, and actions of emerging adults, it would be beneficial to dive deeper into each of the categories in order to offer more of a targeted and developed understanding for counselors, pastors, and other church leaders on specific issues. Lastly, since the purpose of the paradigm is to lay foundational theological groundwork for growth toward masculine maturity, it would also be beneficial to continue the study and identify (even through statistical analysis of test groups) how the paradigm produces this foundational maturity and what approaches can be used to take this group of emerging adult young men on to leadership development and training for the church. Furthermore, the publication of a discipleship program in which these principles can be packaged specifically for church ministries to use for the emerging adult age-group and populations in their congregation, as well as a “leadership foundations” study would also be helpful. These studies would allow the foundational passages that were presented in chapters three and four to be given a practical outworking while giving biblical counselors and discipleship leaders a practical and easily accessible resource for their congregations.

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ABSTRACT

THE CHURCH'S MASCULINE MATURITY CRISIS: TOWARD A BIBLICAL COUNSELING PARADIGM FOR ENGAGING EMERGING ADULTS

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This thesis explores the issue of masculine maturity as defined by Scripture and recognizes the growing maturity gap between the current generation of leadership and the current Millennial generation, particularly the subset group of emerging adults.

The goal of this thesis is as follows: to provide a paradigm for biblical counseling of emerging adults that brings the counselor and the counselee together as biblical men, in a counseling relationship, in order for the older generation to give biblical wisdom and guidance to the younger generation, with a view toward biblical unity, spiritual growth, and a bridging of the wisdom and maturity gap that exists between the generations. With this goal in mind, counselors will be equipped to help emerging adult young men in their sphere of influence to take hold of biblical wisdom, employ it for sanctification, and ultimately to grow more like Christ as they grow in biblically mandated masculine maturity.

KEYWORDS: Adolescence, Bible exposition, biblical counseling, biblical wisdom, biblical worldview, Christian formation, Christian Smith, cognitive behavioral therapy, developmental psychology, discipleship, emerging adulthood (EA), emerging adults, epistemological maturity, faith and rationality, generational dynamics, generational studies, higher education, identity formation, intellectual development, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, local church, meaning making, millennial generation, millennials, moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD), religion, Spirituality, theological anthropology, twentieth century, wholistic counseling, worldview.

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