

Losing Our Religion

Change drives our lives: technological advances, globalization, presidential candidates, and fashion trends. But rapid cultural change—especially when it challenges long-held beliefs—is often viewed with serious reservation. Young adults aged 18-29 are experiencing just this kind of rapid cultural change as scientific advance shape their reproductive choice, and as educational opportunities and a lack of economic incentive encourage them to keep the adult world at bay just a while longer than normal. According to Alex and Brett Harris, this delay represents dangerous backsliding, and this new stage is a social phenomenon that must be ended in order to restore the “biblical life plan.” In the article “Addicted to Adulthood,” the Harris’ say emerging adults—or “kidults,” as they put it—are overly influenced by today’s culture and they need to revert to living by the Bible. Although their argument appears practical at the start of the article by relating to young adults’ logic, they continue to refer to God as the answer to every problem, becoming more dogmatic, extreme and closed off. They cite passages from the bible—the words of God—which limits their argument because these examples are not in touch with reality. People now may be addicted to adulthood, but the Harris brothers are addicted to the bible.

“Honor your father and your mother,” the fifth commandment, the words of god—these views are endorsed by the Harris’, but unabashedly disregarded by kidults. The brothers initially provide the reader with a commandment that most Americans value, regardless of their religion. The use of this commandment shows the reader that the brothers seem to have a relatable argument. They sensibly argue that if it’s more reasonable for their family—if they contribute to the household, if they follow the house rules—emerging adults can remain at their parents’ home. The Harris’ believe this is okay on one more condition: kidults don’t abuse this privilege.

Unfortunately, kidults sometimes take advantage of this opportunity to reside with their parents; this, of course, can be seen as disrespectful. The brothers might be a bit blind to the contemporary economic context that influences this move back home—studies show it's more financially rational to live at home—even if kidults aren't there for a legitimate reason. Despite their somewhat disconnectedness to the economy, the Harris brothers' argument starts off seeming reasonable.

If living with your parents—not helping them—for an extended time is not okay, neither is another common tendency in our culture: not following the biblical life plan to a tee. The Harris's quote a rather rigid declaration from Genesis 2: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." It is true that emerging adults are taking a longer time to move out, get married, start a family, but the brother's new biblical example seems more dogmatic than their last reasonable example. In the biblical past, this verse would be okay to use because it reflected cultural ideals surrounding marriage. Unfortunately for the Harris brothers, our society now has built-in buffer zones between one home and the next, and an entirely different and scientifically informed view of emerging life stages. Our culture permits young adults to attend college, to live on one's own and start career, or even to live with someone without being married. The brothers' attempt at an argument begins to fail because the not all biblical edicts carry the force of universal values as their earlier use of a core commandment did. Furthermore, the Harris Brother almost obsessive focus on marriage as a core Biblical ideal weakens their credibility for readers with other religions. Preaching to the choir has never been the most effective method of argument, and the Harris Brothers' lack of flexibility, and their eagerness to always interpret the bible literally, shows a disregard for other points of views—not to mention other religious worldviews.

Did I mention that these two young brothers seem obsessed with marriage? Good thing, then, that a link to a values-based dating sites flank their argument. The brothers go on to claim kidults are “losing out on the delights [...] the joy of godly marriage” because the culture tells us to live in the moment. They realize the culture has an effect on kidults marriage decisions; , however, they see this culture change as evil. By trying to make the reader feel like emerging adults are missing out on what marriage should be like— “godly”— the brothers are losing touch with reality. Just because young adults aren’t marrying young as God basically says to, the Harris’s argue that marriage is not enjoyed. It’s not that marriage isn’t enjoyed anymore; it’s that now it is socially acceptable to marry later. Waiting on marriage opens the doors to positive changes: new experiences, new relationships, new explorations. Therefore, ignoring the positive light in which culture permits kidults more freedom in their marriage decisions, the Harris’s reasonable credibility collapses in the reader’s eyes.

Kidults, the authors suggest, are said to avoid marriage because it threatens to get in the way of their own selfish wants and obsession with obtaining worldly desires—this is what culture permits for them. Trying to convince the reader that kidults are too self-absorbed, too self-involved, and too self-indulgent, the Harrises quote a verse in John 2:17: “The world is passing away along with its desires.” By using this verse, they make it a point that we are focusing time too much on our wants and that time is slipping through our fingers. According to the brothers, kidults want to treat themselves to experiences, freedom, and nice things. Doesn’t everyone? The Harris’ attack the truth of reality that people want things that the bible claims they shouldn’t. They state “if we’re spending our time and money on our earthly desires and lusts, we may gain the world, but we’ve lost our souls.” How can we as a society enjoy life without enjoying what the world has to offer? Apparently the brothers think that the bible says

for everyone, including kidults, to turn their back on the world. This is utterly unrealistic in our culture, or any past culture. Do the brothers expect everyone to ignore the world and become a hermit-prophet living in the mountains alone? This method of relating kidults to the bible backfires because of the extreme closed off attitude the brothers have. If they don't want people to partake in "earthly desires" such as computers or TVs, how do they expect anyone to read their article on our extravagant laptops? The brothers classify this "gaining the world" as means to feed ones selfish desires, which somewhat agrees with the bible, but completely disagrees with reality.

Not only do the Harris brothers ignore reality, ignore culture, ignore society—they also ignore what it feels like to be an emerging adult. They try to get in a kidult's head to why they do the "terrible" things they do, but it is impossible for them to really understand for one simple reason: the brothers were seventeen when they wrote this article. They are ignorant of what it actually is like to be an emerging adult in our society because they haven't even experienced it. They are ignorant, as well, of what a mature, persistent adult Christianity might look like—a belief system that is not a set of edicts and judgments, but an ongoing dialog between self, culture, and God. Had the Harris Brothers experience this kind of belief, their argument would be much less condescending and close-minded, and would appeal more broadly not only to their Christian base, but sensible people of all stripes.