

CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE MESSAGE OF JESUS

ABSTRACT

Some of the key biblical images used in the gospel message include (1) kingdom of God, (2) reconciliation, (3) substitution and atonement, (4) lost and found, (5) redemption, deliverance and freedom, (6) adoption, sonship and the family of God, (7) salvation, and (8) Jesus' 'I am' statements in John's gospel. It is suggested that the biblical images which will connect better with youth today are those which are more relational and align more naturally with the issues that youth are facing. Those images which readily connect with today's youth include: lost and found; adoption, sonship, and the family of God; reconciliation; redemption, deliverance and freedom; and some of Jesus' 'I am' statements. The images of: kingdom of God; salvation; and some of Jesus' 'I am' statements need to be somewhat redrawn in order to connect. The more objective theological images of substitution and atonement tend not to engage with today's youth, but remain important concepts which should be taught after an initial connection with God.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are a number of biblical images that are used to capture the gospel message. This essay will explore eight key biblical images including (1) kingdom of God, (2) reconciliation, (3) substitution and atonement, (4) lost and found, (5) redemption, deliverance and freedom, (6) adoption, sonship and the family of God, (7) salvation, and (8) Jesus' 'I am' statements in John's gospel. All of these images would have been employed by the original authors because they connected with the audience, yet in today's culture some images will connect with youth better than others. As such, having explored these biblical images, in order to answer *how* these images connect with youth today, the discussion will turn to examine a snapshot of today's youth culture, and then suggest firstly, which images readily connect with youth today, secondly, which images need to be redrawn to connect with youth today, and finally, which images tend not to connect with youth today.

2. SOME KEY BIBLICAL IMAGES USED IN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

2.1 Kingdom of God

Ladd emphasises the widely recognised notion that the main focus and content of Jesus' preaching throughout the gospels is the kingdom of God.¹ Similarly, Dickson describes the kingdom as the main theme of the gospel.² The teaching regarding this key gospel image of the kingdom of God in the New Testament (NT) revolves primarily around its character and imminence.³ Firstly regarding its character, God's kingdom is highly valuable (Matt 13:44-45), eternal and universal in scope (Matt 24:11), it is not geographic but relates to the dynamic rule of God, and entry is based not on Jewish law but on a relationship with Jesus (Jn 14:6). Secondly,

¹ George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Rev.ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 54.

² John Dickson, *Promoting the Gospel: A Practical Guide to the Biblical Art of Sharing Your Faith* (Sydney: Blue Bottle, 2005), 182.

³ Caragounis, C. C. 'Kingdom of God/ Kingdom of Heaven', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. (ed. J.B.Green, S.McKnight & H.Marshall; Leicester: IVP, 1992), 420.

noting the tension between the present and future aspects of the kingdom of God in the New Testament, Ladd highlights that Jesus entered history and inaugurated the kingdom triumphing over evil by the cross, yet the final consummation of the kingdom awaits Jesus' return.⁴ That ultimate fulfilment will include the formation of a redeemed society with no evil, and perfect fellowship with God.⁵ In summary, the gospel, as captured by the kingdom of God imagery, is basically that God's kingdom is most valuable, outshining and surpassing all other kingdoms (eg. the Roman Empire), and that people are invited to become a part of this kingdom through a relationship with Jesus as Lord.

2.2 Reconciliation

Another key image used in the gospel message is Reconciliation. Reconciliation captures both the reality of the broken relationship between God and people, and the work of Jesus to heal that relationship. Paul describes his ministry as a ministry of reconciliation, and this reconciliation is primarily the work of God (2 Cor 5:17-21).⁶ This passage highlights the problem of sin, as well as Christ's death on the cross to deal with that sin. Key to his gospel is Paul's consistent emphasis on the centrality of the cross with respect to making reconciliation possible (Rom 5:10-11; Eph 2:14-18; Col 1:19-23). Perhaps the narrative of Jesus which best captures the Father's heart for reconciliation is the story of the lost son (Luke 15:11-31).⁷ The good news captured by the image of reconciliation then, is that people who are alienated from God by sin, are able to be reconciled to him because of Christ's work on the cross.

2.3 Substitution and Atonement

Central to the gospel message, especially for the first century Jew, are the related images of substitution and atonement. With the sacrificial system as a key aspect of the law, heritage, and Jewish life in the first century, it is not surprising that this

⁴ Ladd, *A Theology of the NT*, 65-67.

⁵ Ladd, *A Theology of the NT*, 62.

⁶ Colin G. Kruse, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove: IVP, 1987), 127.

⁷ When the son returns from squandering his wealth on wild living, the father is unrestrained in his eagerness to be reconciled with his son.

image captures deep truths of the gospel. The Greek word ἱλασμός, translated as *atonement sacrifice* or *propitiation*, is understood as ‘an appeasement necessitated by sin’, or similarly ‘an instrument for appeasing’.⁸ This image captures the problem of sin, and is explicit about the solution. This solution, clearly stated by John, is that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for sin (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10 cf. John 1:29).⁹ Working from the knowledge that sin brings death (Rom 5:12), the images of substitution and atonement show that it was Christ who substituted himself in the place of the sinner, and took on the consequences of sin (namely death), through his work on the cross, so that others could be considered righteous in God’s sight (Rom 5:19; 2 Cor 5:21) and enjoy eternal life (Rom 6:23).

2.4 Lost and Found

The heart of the gospel is captured in the image of being lost and found.¹⁰ In summarising his ministry, Jesus emphasises that the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost (Lk 19:10). Luke chapter 15 is cast as part of Jesus’ defence of his ministry. In response to the jibes of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus argues that restoration of the lost is what God is all about.¹¹ Jesus describes the joy of a shepherd who rejoices over finding a lost sheep, and the joy of a woman who finds a lost coin, likening these emotions to those experienced in heaven when a sinner repents. In this way Jesus links ‘lostness’ with sinfulness, and ‘being found’ with repentance. This image reaches its climax in the story of the lost son. The joy of the father who embraces the repentant son typifies God’s feelings toward anyone who repents and turns to him. The gospel image of lost and found captures God’s heart for the lost, and his readiness to embrace those who repent.

⁸ Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed. (BDAG) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 474.

⁹ For those with a Jewish background this carried tremendous meaning, and as such the writer to the Hebrews also captures this imagery (Heb 2:17), as does Paul (Rom 3:23-25; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 1:7; Col 1:19-23).

¹⁰ This is a key feature of Luke’s gospel, taking up a whole chapter – chapter 15.

¹¹ Achtemeier, *et al*, *Introducing the New Testament: It’s Literature and Theology*. (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2001), 168.

2.5 Redemption, Deliverance and Freedom

The biblical images of redemption, deliverance and freedom provide closely related perspectives on the gospel. Romans 3:22-24 is a key passage referring to the redemption image.¹² The term ἀπολύτρωσις translated there as ‘redemption’ was commonly used in the first century referring to the buying back of a slave.¹³ Paul commonly uses this term describing the release from a captive condition – in particular release from the bondage of sin (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; see also Heb 9:15) – and as such it can be translated *release*, *redemption*, or *deliverance*, and carries the broader idea of freedom.¹⁴ Redemption is commonly linked to forgiveness, and this is made possible only by the cross (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). The broader concept of freedom is developed right throughout the NT particularly by the many healings and exorcisms.¹⁵ In fact, Jesus used this picture of freedom as a header to introduce his earthly ministry (Luke 4:18-19).¹⁶ In summary, the closely linked images of redemption, deliverance and freedom all state positively God’s ability to break people free from the bondage of sin.

2.6 Adoption, Sonship and the Family of God

Another group of closely related biblical images of the gospel are adoption, sonship and the family of God.¹⁷ Jesus can rightly call God his father (Matt 11:27; Mark 14:36), but on the basis of adoption all believers can become children of God and call God ‘father’.¹⁸ The family of God image is inclusive, warm, redemptive, and inviting. The adoption image carries strong implications regarding inheritance and status. DeSilva highlights that in the first century Greco-Roman world, honour was

¹² ‘This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.’ (Rom 3:22-24)

¹³ BDAG, 117.

¹⁴ BDAG, 117.

¹⁵ Jesus demonstrates the power of God to free people from illness (Matt 9:20-22), disability (Mark 2:1-12), demon possession (Matt 8:28-34), and even death (John 11:1-45).

¹⁶ The word for ‘freedom’ here is ἄφεσις which could also be translated ‘release’. This carries a similar meaning to ἀπολύτρωσις.

¹⁷ This broad category is made evident by the title of ‘Father’ applied to God.

¹⁸ In Matthew those who can be called sons [and daughters] of their Father in heaven are those who display the ethical characteristics befitting the family of God (Matt 5:44), and those who are followers of Jesus (12:50). John makes it clear that not everyone can be called a child of God, but this right is freely given to those who receive Jesus and believe in his name (John 1:12-13).

ascribed – at birth as well as later in life through adoption – according to one's parentage and lineage.¹⁹ As such, Christians who were said to be adopted by God understood the immense honour that accompanied having God as a father. Key texts which highlight the inheritance aspect of adoption are Gal 4:4-7 and Rom 8:15-17. Children of God are co-heirs with Christ; they inherit the benefits which are part of life in the family of God. The images of adoption, sonship, and the family of God capture key benefits of status, honour, protection and inheritance associated with the gospel message.

2.7 Salvation

Next to the kingdom of God, perhaps the most widespread biblical image used in the gospel message is that of salvation. The image of salvation implies an inherent danger (ie. something to be saved from), and the key questions which this image answers are: (1) Who needs to be saved? (2) Who does the saving? (3) How is one saved? (4) What is one saved from? And (5) What are the results of being saved? First, it is sinners who need to be saved (1 Tim 1:15), which includes all people (Rom 3:23, cf. 1 Tim 2:3-4). Second, it is God and more specifically Jesus, who does the saving (Lk 19:10; Jn 3:17; Phil 1:28; Heb 9:28).²⁰ Third, sinners are saved by belief in Jesus (Acts 16:31; 1 Cor 1:21), by giving allegiance to him (Rom 10:9), and this is by grace through faith (Eph 2:8; cf. Tit 3:4-7). Fourth, those who are saved, are saved from God's condemnation (Jn 3:17; 12:47) and wrath (Rom 5:9), from perishing (2 Cor 2:15; 2 Thes 2:10), from destruction (Phil 1:28; Heb 10:39; Jas 4:12), and from death (Jas 5:20). Finally, those who are saved are included in God's kingdom (Matt 19:24-25; Lk 13:23-30) and included in the community of believers (Acts 2:47), they receive forgiveness (Luke 7:36-50), and fullness of life (John 10:9-

¹⁹ deSilva gives a stand out example: Octavian – who later became Emperor Augustus – was adopted by Julius Caesar. This adoption resulted in a considerable increase of his honour and standing in society. David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 28.

²⁰ Demarest notes that the name Ἰησοῦς (*Jesus*) is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua* meaning 'Yahweh is salvation'. Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), 26.

10).²¹ Demarest aptly summarises the image of salvation as the deliverance of sinners by Jesus from sin, death and the Devil, into eternal life.²²

2.8 Jesus' "I am" Statements in John's Gospel

Dickson suggests that the core of the gospel message is: the work of Jesus.²³ Accepting this, it could be said then that the key "I am" sayings in John – where Jesus describes himself and his ministry by way of seven metaphors – provide helpful biblical images of the gospel. Using this "I am" formula, Jesus describes himself as the bread of life (6:35, 41, 48, 51), the light of the world (8:12; 9:5), the gate for the sheep (10:7, 9), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way the truth and the life (14:6), and the true vine (15:1, 5). Burge highlights that these "I am" sayings in John, and their accompanying narratives, function like the kingdom parables in the synoptics, while at the same time illuminating the purpose and meaning of Jesus' ministry.²⁴ Taking each of these metaphors in turn, it could be concluded that a biblical image of the gospel is that Jesus is the bread of life, or that Jesus is the light of the world, or that Jesus is the gate for the sheep, and so on.

3. HOW THESE IMAGES CONNECT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

By nature of the similarities and differences between the original and receiving cultures, some biblical images will connect more readily with today's youth than others.²⁵ Having explored some key biblical images, the next task is to examine which images connect with young people today. One of the key factors behind this connection is the extent to which the biblical image engages with the issues of

²¹ Some good narratives linked with salvation in the gospels include: Jesus calming the storm (Matt 8:22-27), the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Lk 7:36-50), the calling of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-9)

²² Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 26.

²³ Dickson, *Promoting the Gospel*, 183.

²⁴ G. M. Burge, "I am" Sayings' in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Ed. J.B.Green, S.McKnight & H.Marshall; Leicester: IVP, 1992), 354-356.

²⁵ Applying these ancient biblical images into today's modern context – separated by time, culture, and language – is a challenge not to be underestimated. If it is true that the bible means what the original author intended it to mean to the original audience, then the hermeneutical task is to correctly understand that intended meaning in its original context, and contextualise it appropriately so that it can be properly understood and applied in a new cultural context.

today's youth culture. As such the discussion will continue by first considering a brief snapshot of today's youth culture, before exploring which images readily engage today's youth, which ones may need to be redrawn, and which ones tend not to engage today's youth.

3.1 A Snapshot of Today's Youth Culture

Notwithstanding the fact that he is writing predominantly about American postmodernism in 1997, Jimmy Long's book *Generating Hope* provides some enduring insights which capture many issues faced by today's youth in Australia. Long suggests that a major force in the lives of the postmodern generations is *confusion*.²⁶ Having been offered too many options, the common despairing response is "whatever".²⁷ As a survival mechanism, postmoderners are unlikely to place trust in anything they can't see or experience and they are sceptical about authority and truth claims.²⁸ As a result, trust cannot be demanded but must be earned, and truth cannot simply be stated but must be modelled and experienced.²⁹ Many young people though, do have a caring attitude toward the marginalised and the environment.³⁰ There is also a rise in sexual activity amongst young people in comparison to previous decades,³¹ which Long sees as stemming partly from a lack of intimacy at home and poor self image.³² He also highlights pain, stress, and alienation as key issues facing the postmodern generations.³³ Yet, in the midst of

²⁶ Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 37.

²⁷ Long, *Generating Hope*, 38.

²⁸ Long, *Generating Hope*, 45.

²⁹ Long, *Generating Hope*, 45.

³⁰ The phrase "Think globally, act locally" has captured the imagination of many, and contributed in part to a measurable rise in volunteerism . Long, *Generating Hope*, 46.

³¹ Among a number of other findings, a national report by Latrobe uni found that "Half the men born between 1941 and 1950 had vaginal intercourse by age 18 and this declined to [age] 16 for men born between 1981 and 1986. For women the [average] age at first vaginal intercourse declined from 19 to 16." *Sex in Australia: Summary findings of the Australian Study of Health and Relationships*, (Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University, 2001/02), 1.

³² Long, *Generating Hope*, 47.

³³ Long, *Generating Hope*, 47-48.

this pain develops a yearning for community and a yearning for God (or at least something transcendent).³⁴

Nevertheless, the extent to which these issues are experienced is not to be overstated, particularly with regards to hopelessness and pessimism. Walsh and Keesmaat identify what they call 'cybernetic global optimism'.³⁵ They observe that many living in a postmodern milieu have a renewed sense of optimism about the future, and see economic growth as well as technology as largely providing answers and solutions to the world's problems. Many young people in today's Australian culture – as expressed in television shows like 'Australian Idol' and 'The Biggest Loser' – believe that if they put their mind to it, they can achieve anything. So, while some are gripped with the pessimism of a postmodern mindset, others (and sometimes even the same people!) are staunchly optimistic.³⁶

Data from a number of recent Australian studies tends to also capture this tension.³⁷ On the one hand, young people are experiencing significant issues, fears, and felt needs, centering particularly around family and friendship networks. While often not articulated in this way, the felt needs include a need for hope, comfort, protection, belonging, identity, acceptance, forgiveness, purpose and direction. Yet at the same time, in the same cultural group, there is a sense of optimism about the future, generally along economic lines.

³⁴ Long, *Generating Hope*, 52.

³⁵ Brian. J. Walsh & Sylvia. C. Keesmaat. *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 26.

³⁶ Walsh and Keesmaat capture this brilliantly: "Somehow, crushing despair and even nihilism capture the imagination of a generation that at the same time is buoyantly optimistic about the future. What we see here is both a sense of the emptiness, betrayal and ending of a particular cultural mythology and—at the same time and often in the same people!—a retrenchment, intensification and rebirth of that very same worldview or cultural myth." Walsh and Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed*, 26.

³⁷ Key studies that were explored include:

Fearless and Flexible: Gen Y Talks About Their Generation: Media Release, 30 September 2006, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2006.

Kids Help Line 2006 Overview - Issues Concerning Children and Young People (Kids Helpline, 2006).

National Survey of Young Australians 2006: Key and Emerging Issues (Mission Australia, 2006).

Tucci, J., Mitchell, J. and Goddard, C. *Children's fears, hopes and heroes – Modern Childhood in Australia tracking Australian children's attitudes and concerns about childhood* (Australian Childhood Foundation and the National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse at Monash University, 2007).

3.2 Biblical Images Which Readily Connect with Youth Today

In this diverse cultural milieu, there are a number of biblical images which readily connect with youth today. These include the images of (1) lost and found, (2) adoption, sonship, and the family of God, (3) reconciliation, and (4) redemption, deliverance and freedom. The National Survey of Young Australians 2006, conducted by Mission Australia, shows that young people most highly value family and friends, as well as wanting to feel needed, and valued.³⁸ As such, when there is fragmentation in the family unit or friendship circles, that which is most valued is lost, and the associated feelings of 'lostness', or not belonging, rise to the surface. The first three images primarily provide hope in the midst of broken relationships, the fourth deals more with personal feelings of being trapped. First, the image of lost and found provides the hope that God is actively seeking those who are lost (Lk 19:10). God is able and willing to find the people who feel lost, and he has the power to bring them into a safe place. Second, the image of adoption into the family of God provides reassurance that while human families are less than perfect, God's family is a safe place, and offers an immense sense of belonging. God calls young people out of shame into adoption, where adoption brings renewed relationship.³⁹ Third, reconciliation crosses over both of the previous images, and can tap into deeply felt confusion and fear regarding relationship issues. Reconciliation, though it seems like an objective technical term, is not a Christian jargon word, and its secular meaning readily imparts hope by promising healing and restoration, ultimately in terms of a person's most important relationship – with God. Finally, the interrelated images of redemption, deliverance and freedom, speak less to relational issues, and more to personal issues of addiction and feelings of being trapped or locked into seemingly unbreakable cycles such as depression and guilt. These images provide the hope that God is able and willing to break in from the outside, and destroy the things which control their world. Given that redemption and

³⁸ *National Survey of Young Australians 2006: Key and Emerging Issues* (Mission Australia, 2000), 93

³⁹ Long, *Generating Hope*, 102-113. However the Christian youth worker must be careful not to send the message that the young person no longer belongs to their earthly family.

deliverance border on being jargon words, perhaps this final image is best communicated to a youth audience in terms of being 'set free'.

Some of Jesus' 'I am' statements will connect more readily than others. Perhaps most relevant is 'I am the way the truth and the life'. Though this may offend a cynical postmodern audience, it does readily connect with youth who crave meaning and purpose in life. 'I am the light of the world' may engage those looking for direction. The 'bread of life' image may also connect with those who have grown dissatisfied because of an insatiable hunger for material things, realising that possessions do not bring lasting contentment. The 'true vine' image is easily understood by today's youth, and will connect with those seeking a sense of belonging, and also those who want their life to be worthwhile and bear real fruit. Finally, 'I am the resurrection and the life' will be just as radical and provocative today as it was in Jesus day. Those with ears to hear will engage with this truth as they see it lived out in the changed lives of the Christians they interact with.

3.3 Biblical Images Which Need To Be Redrawn to Connect with Youth Today

While some images are readily understood, others need to be slightly redrawn in order to recapture more of their original impact. These include (1) kingdom of God, (2) salvation, and (3) some of Jesus' 'I am' statements. First, while Australian youth are aware of monarchies throughout the world, particularly Britain, the concept of kingdom may be understood intellectually, but it is not consciously part of daily life. As such, the kingdom of God image could be redrawn as 'community of God' since young people are very aware that they live as part of various communities.⁴⁰ However this redrawing misses the fact that God is the head of his kingdom. Still, depending on the degree to which a young person considers living in communities as important, the 'community of God' image may be attractive, and more importantly, communicate God's heart to be connected with and relating to everyday

⁴⁰ E.g. local community, sporting communities, and online communities via MSN and MySpace.

people. Long suggests that ‘The postmodern generation needs to become part of a Christian Community’,⁴¹ and it is likely that they will feel connected to the community before they feel connected to God. Second, though the salvation image could perhaps be placed in the previous category, given that it is close to being a jargon word, and in danger of being cliché, it is probably best redrawn as ‘rescue’. In addition, Long rightly urges a re-focus on the relational side of salvation not just the judicial side.⁴² This would include a focus on the ‘who’ and ‘what’ of salvation, over and above the ‘how’.⁴³ There are examples daily on the news of various rescues taking place, and these can be connected with the work of Christ in coming into the world to rescue sinners. However, as with the images of lost and found, and freedom, it will only connect to the extent which this image provides a solution to the issues currently being experienced by the young person. That is, as with all the other images, if the young person doesn’t feel like they need to be rescued, then they won’t connect with the rescue image. Third, Jesus’ agricultural “I am” images: the gate for the sheep, and the good shepherd need to be redrawn in order to engage youth today. Perhaps the gate for the sheep could become the ‘security guard’, and the shepherd could become the ‘footy coach’. These modern images communicate access to desirable places, and guidance in life.

3.4 Biblical Images Which Tend not to Connect with Youth Today

In agreement with Long, it is suggested that objective theological concepts such as substitution and atonement tend not to connect with postmodern audiences.⁴⁴ This is probably due in part to pessimism about objective truth which is stated rather than experienced. Atonement in particular carried tremendous meaning for the first century Jew, since it was part of their daily life. Connection with God was sustained through ritualistic sacrifice and atonement. However this concept is alien to young people today, and must be explained first in its historical context, and only then will it

⁴¹ Long, *Generating Hope*, 82.

⁴² Long, *Generating Hope*, 100.

⁴³ What is meant here by focus on the ‘who’ is a focus on the relational side of salvation. The ‘what’ involves focusing on how it impacts a young persons life. Whereas the ‘how’ might refer to more judicial and objective aspects such as justification and atonement.

⁴⁴ Long, *Generating Hope*, 82.

be understood. Substitution, while being more easily understood, will perhaps still not readily connect due to the objective nature of the concept. It is the more relational images such as adoption which tend to engage youth more readily. However, these concepts should not be ignored all together, but rather used after a young person's initial connection with God in order to further fill out their understanding of the cross and its theological significance.

4. CONCLUSION

Given the similarities and differences between today's youth culture and the culture(s) into which the scriptures were originally given, some biblical images of the gospel message connect better than others with today's youth. The biblical images which are more relational and align more naturally with the issues that youth are facing will connect better. Those images which readily connect with today's youth include: lost and found; adoption, sonship, and the family of God; reconciliation; redemption, deliverance and freedom; and some of Jesus' 'I am' statements. The images of: kingdom of God; salvation; and some of Jesus' 'I am' statements need to be somewhat redrawn in order to connect. In particular kingdom of God can become 'community of God', and a focus on the judicial side of salvation needs to be shifted to focus on the relational side, and would benefit from being redrawn as 'rescue'. The more objective theological images of substitution and atonement tend not to engage with today's youth, but remain important concepts which should be taught after an initial connection with God has been established.

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