

# rites of passage: A MODEL FOR TRANSFORMATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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## THE BEGINNING OF ADOLESCENCE

It seems the world would be a better place without adolescents. Before you cry out in rage at my callousness, it would be good to consider that much of the world is a better place because there are none. Yes, there are hormone-hopping, sexually ripening teen-age citizens in most, if not all, societies. But adolescence, as we've come to know and lament it in North America, is a reality many other cultures simply do not have built into their societies.

Donald Joy writes:

The relatively modern phenomenon of adolescence is defined as a psychosocial period beginning with the arrival of sexual potency and extending until economic and social independence is achieved (1978:91).

One of the factors which has contributed to the rise of adolescence is the changing perception of puberty and falling age of its onset. Strictly speaking, puberty is the time when people are first able to have children. But, while puberty used to be thought of as "the beginning of adulthood itself," it is now considered simply as "the beginning of a stage between childhood and adulthood" (Koteskey 1987:12). Joy adds:

Arrival at puberty is increasingly early in North America and Western Europe. In 1840 the average girl's first menstruation occurred at age seventeen. In 1960 the age was thirteen, and by 1970 it was slightly earlier than thirteen.... First orgasm in males is less observable and hence less reliable data is available, but the trend has been the same (1978:93).

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THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 1998 • VOL. 53 • NO. 2

Boys, then, remain about twelve to eighteen months behind girls in the onset of puberty (Joy 1978:92). (Orthodox Jewish synagogues recognize bat mitzvah for girls at age twelve and bar mitzvah for boys at age thirteen [Salkin 1992:31].)

Further evidence concerning the recent introduction of adolescence comes from Ronald Koteskey. He writes:

Two thousand years ago under Roman law, women could marry at twelve and men at fourteen. A thousand years ago under English law it was the same. Two hundred years ago under common law in the United States it was still the same—women could marry at twelve and men at fourteen. For 3000 years, the minimum legal age for marriage did not change.... Then, just as the age of puberty was decreasing, laws *increasing* the minimum legal age for marriage were passed in the United States and Europe.... Although they were adults and had been treated as adults for thousands of years, teenagers were redefined as “children.” ... *This* was the creation of adolescence (1987:14-15).

Koteskey goes on to quote John and Virginia Demos:

The concept of adolescence, as generally understood and applied, did not exist before the last two decades of the nineteenth century. One could almost call it an invention of that period (1987:16).

Finally, Koteskey concurs with those who “call adolescence ‘a period of temporary insanity between childhood and adulthood.’” But he goes on to add that it is our culture, not our teens, who are insane (1987:16)!

#### ADOLESCENT CONTEXT

According to Joy<sup>1</sup>, the issues before adolescent children which must be resolved before they can attain adult status revolve around their value, role, and status. When these three needs are met through adult and family involvement and blessing, the tendency is to launch healthy, responsible adults. However, when adolescents handle their own transition into adulthood, the results are generally destructive. If children are not valued at home, or by significant adults, they will find a peer group or gang that approves of them. When the role of “woman” or “man” is denied them, they will remain a “boy” or a “girl” forever, forsaking meaningful vocations and failing to contribute positively to society. And when adolescents are not given the opportunity to share the status of responsible and competent adults, they will develop illegal, immoral, or near fatal “initiation” rites into their own ignored adolescent culture.

Having adult status denied them, many teenagers in the crucible of adolescence have sought ingenuous, and often-times damaging, means of attaining that status. Robert J. Samuelson quotes Leon Dash, who reports in *When Children Want Children*, that for many girls living in poverty-stricken areas, having

a baby is a *tangible* achievement in an otherwise dreary and empty future. It is one

way of announcing: I *am* a woman. For many boys...the birth of a baby represents an identical rite of passage. The boy is saying: I *am* a man (1993).

It seems then, that the question is not, "Will these children ever grow up?" but rather, "What kind of adults will they become?" That question may best be answered by paying special attention to those significant persons who surround them and escort them to the next stage of their lives. The hopes and freedoms of responsible adulthood are there, as are the despair and squandered opportunities of endless childhood.

#### RITEs OF PASSAGE

An element missing from our culture but present in most which do not include this ten-year (or so) interlude between childhood and adulthood, is the rite of passage. Rites of passage mark distinctions in an otherwise continuous life course. They celebrate and facilitate change and the disruption of standard social categories, while at the same time they preserve them (Myerhoff, Camino, and Turner 1987:381). Though the intention here is to study rites which carry children into adulthood, rites accompany change and growth at various times in our lives: from non-being to being in birth (Van Gennep 1960:41-64), from childhood to adulthood in puberty rites (Van Gennep 1960:65-101), from single to married in marriage (Van Gennep 1960:116-45), and from life to death in funeral rites (Van Gennep 1960:146-65).

Paul Hill, Jr., in a discussion about rites of passage for use with African-American males, writes:

Rites of passage are those structures, rituals, and ceremonies by which age-class members or individuals in a group successfully come to know who they are and what they are about—the purpose and meaning for their existence, as they proceed from one clearly defined state of existence to the next state or passage in their lives (1992:62).

In the afterword to the poignant *Circle of Life* picture album, Peter Matthiessen writes,

[R]ites momentarily lift us from the petty confusions of existence and make us pay complete attention to the passage of our lives, complete attention to the human transformations that link and bind us to all other humans ...complete attention to the wonder of it all (1991:228-29).

In specifically adolescent rites, Buddhist children are formed into adult Buddhists by following the Buddha's own transition from wealth to enlightenment during the Shin Byu ceremony (Zahniser 1991:3). At the Jewish bar/bat mitzvah, a thirteen or twelve year-old child is recognized as "son or daughter of the commandment," which means they are presumed "old enough to be responsible for" living not only "a Jewish life, but also to sanctify life" (Salkin 1992:3). Through the kisungu rite, Basanga girls of Zaire are initiated into the world of adulthood through the symbolic death of their childhood (Persons 1990:165). Baptism, as a symbol of death to sin and new life in Jesus Christ, serves as a focal rite of

passage into full participation within the Christian community (Tollefson 1990:324).

This is why Victor Turner describes rites of passage as culturally prescribed rites which "accompany the passage of a person from one social status to another" (1987:386). Others have gone so far as to describe the work of rites of passage and the ritual process as achieving a shift in consciousness appropriate with new social markers or standing (Meyerhoff, Camino, and Turner 1987:385).

In North America, however, no standard rite of passage from childhood to adulthood exists. Instead,

a protracted and amorphous state of adolescence prevails in which biological and psychological transitions are taking place . . . unassisted by ritual processes that would make the transition clear and definite for all involved (Zahniser 1991:4).

Much work has been done to contextualize adolescent rites from other cultures. (Zahniser 1991) Still, none have emerged through this work or from our own culture which have attained the needed status to bring about the transition from childhood to adulthood in a coherent and meaningful way. Indeed, just when our teens need adults the most, in the years of their developing sexuality and cognitive decision-making abilities, that is when our society most clearly leaves them to themselves, with cries of insanity and "I don't understand you!"

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADOLESCENT RITES OF PASSAGE

Before we can bring a rite of passage to church or synagogue for use in transforming our young, we must first understand how they work. There are three subdivisions, or elements, to a viable rite of passage: rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of re-incorporation (Van Gennep 1960:11). (See Figure 1.)

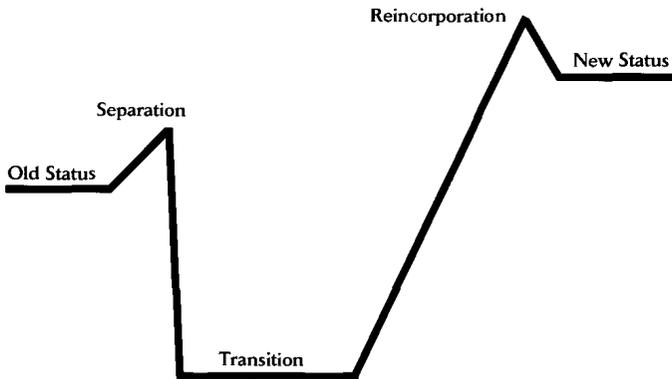


Figure 1. Rite of Passage Structure<sup>2</sup>

The first phase, separation, involves bringing together symbols in a ritual of separation from others in the old state from which the transition is being made. Here, for example, Australian aboriginal boys are initiated into manhood as they are separated from their mothers and captured by unknown, usually masked, men and told they are about to die. Rites of transition put the initiates in a kind of limbo, betwixt-and-between their old and new states. (Often this is called the liminal phase, from the Latin, *limen* "threshold" [Turner 1987:385].) This is a chaotic time of testing where former identities, statuses, and roles are eliminated in preparation for new ones. Initiates go through this challenging ordeal as a symbolic visitation to the womb and the tomb in order to be reborn into a new and, as-of-yet, unknown reality (Zahniser 1991:7). The final phase, reincorporation, returns the initiate, through ritual, into society but at the new state to which the transition has now been made. Among the Australian aboriginals mentioned earlier, the final act of reincorporation is a ceremony honoring the deity and removing a tooth of the initiate, identifying him permanently as a man (Zahniser 1991:4-6).

Rites of separation, then, "remove initiates from the flow of social structure, shutting them into the liminal phase of the process in which they are raised to the level of the new social reality into which they are to be integrated" (Zahniser 1991:6). Similarly, rites of reincorporation return the initiates to the normal flow of social reality, but at a new level. Without these rites of separation and reincorporation suspending socially accepted identities, statuses, and roles, rites of transition would be impossible. It is in this middle phase of liminality, where the world as the initiate knows it is "locked out," that the status of the child is raised to that of an adult.

Within the context of the chaos created during the rites of transition, enabled through the suspension of normal and familiar structures, initiates experience a heightened sense of creativity, community, and bonding. There is creativity because new things are possible and nothing is taken for granted during transition (Zahniser 1991:7). Further, community is created, not simply geographically, but through the freedom created as participants interact, not in accordance with the binding roles of their social status, behind which the human person is only dimly discernible, but according to the very real, individual identity found in their common humanity (Turner 1977:177).

Zahniser suggests bonding as an

apt image to describe the process of forming a new identity and a sense of belonging that result from that process [the transition phase]. But in addition to the bonding to a new identity and the bonding to the community in a new way that result from a rite of passage, initiates bond to the beliefs and values of that community as well (1991:8).

He calls this "pedagogical function of the rite of passage process 'bonding to meaning'" (1991:8).

Tollefson, too, shows how the rite of passage structure presents a "pedagogical opportunity for promoting personal development and spiritual growth" (1990:315). The process for this pedagogical opportunity within the rites of transition, as he describes them, are: marginality of the initiates; reflection of the familiar patterns, now gone forever;

cognitive dissonance as seemingly unattainable patterns are laid out for the future; and reorientation in self-understanding with respect to their perception of appropriate social obligation and behavior. All of this leads Tollefson to characterize the rites of transition as an "intensely creative and personal process" (1990:317).

While Wynkoop (1982) points out that rites of passage release us from a lower level of privilege, but also require of us higher demands of integrity and obedience, it is also true that for a rite to be truly effective in this way, it must be recognized and actualized, at least through some subset of the initiates' social community of younger and older persons. Those younger must look anxiously forward to "their" day, while older members can celebrate, through ritual as well as informally, and recognize in every way possible the new adult status of the former child. Van Gennep writes:

The person who enters a status at variance with the one previously held becomes "sacred" to the others who remain in the profane state. It is this new condition which calls for rites eventually incorporating the individual into the group and returning him to the customary routines of life (1960:vii-ix).

The importance of this social recognition shows up in other ways as well. The movement away from childhood to adulthood necessitates a movement away from parents, and their participation is almost always as spectators, not key players. Sponsors or mentors, or sometimes unknown adult members of the surrounding tribes, perform the actual rites of initiation and passage in certain cultures. Hence the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child" (Hill 1992:55). David Elkind writes:

We all have a "sense of becoming," of growing and changing as individuals. Markers confirm us in our sense of growing and changing. This confirmation, moreover, has to be social as well as personal. However personally gratifying the attainment of certain markers is, such attainments mean much more when accompanied by social recognition. Indeed, much of the gratification of reaching new markers is the public approval that comes with them (1984:93).

One trend in American Judaism is the privatization of bar/bat mitzvah, the so-called *havdalah* bar/bat mitzvah held in conjunction with the service which ends Shabbat instead of the more traditional Shabbat morning service. Salkin writes:

Mainstream opinion discourages such *havdalah* ceremonies. The reasoning is clear—the Torah is not traditionally read at that time; the timing of such ceremonies puts undue emphasis on the Saturday evening festivities; and *havdalah* bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies convince people that the service is "theirs," diminishing the centrality of the community in Jewish life (1992:7).

#### INVITING RITES OF PASSAGE TO CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE

There has been much discussion in current literature about reclaiming rites of passage for various uses in our society today. One of the most clearly written calls comes from

psychologist Kathleen Wall and journalist Gary Ferguson (1994). Their discussion of rites and rituals for work, relationships, family, lost youth, friendship, divorce, mid- and end of life is gripping and thorough. Another popular discussion of the rituals of our lives is written by Robert Fulghum (1995). Although more descriptive than prescriptive, this is a helpful volume which has raised the consciousness of many to the importance of rites and rituals in all our lives. Many of these rites can be adapted and utilized by a worshipping community for the benefit of all who are willing to accept their challenge for transformation and change. General guidelines for developing or adapting an adolescent rite of passage include:

1. Target teens nearing the onset of sexual maturity. This may mean including males who are older than participating females.
2. Involve parents peripherally, not as principal players.
3. Involve as much of the worshipping community as possible in rituals of separation and re-incorporation, as well as instructors and mentors during the rites of transition.
4. Educate the worshipping body as to how their operational expectations of the new initiates should change.
5. Celebrate, celebrate, celebrate!

#### RECENT RESEARCH

Each summer since 1987 I have taken a group of teenagers backpacking in the southern Rocky Mountains. After seeing great fruits from this ministry in terms of spiritual growth, I intentionally planned a backpacking experience around a rite of passage model.<sup>3</sup> The overall trip was seen as a rite of passage, with separation, in this case, leaving home; transition, the days and nights on the trail within the wilderness; and reincorporation, coming home to a familiar environment, but hopefully on a higher spiritual plane. Further, a daily trail curriculum was used, titled *Path to Adulthood*, which was designed to challenge the youth to accept the greater rights as well as the increased responsibilities of adulthood. Finally, the youth were led through a culminating rite of passage ceremony developed as a climax to the week long experience and conducted the last night on the trail.

To measure the effectiveness of the backpacking trip and its constituent elements with respect to spiritual growth, the teenagers were given the twenty question Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) the day before departing, then four weeks and again twelve weeks after returning. Each question was rated on a six-point modified Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree with no mid-point. The two post-tests contained ten additional questions which asked the youth to rate how the following items or activities contributed to their spiritual growth: daily hiking, Bible studies, sharing times, living in the wilderness, quiet times, relationships formed during the trip, rite of passage ceremony, leaving the familiar world behind, journal writing, and carving on their walking sticks. These were rated on a scale identical to the SWBS. The youth were also asked to write in a daily reflective journal, answering general, as well as specific, questions regarding particular experiences during the trip or elements of the curriculum.

Briefly, the SWBS was used for several reasons. The SWBS is an integrative tool, measuring both the vertical dimension of spiritual well-being in relation to God (the odd-num-

bered questions) and the horizontal dimension of life purpose and satisfaction, with no reference to anything religious (the even-numbered questions). These two measures serve as a check against each other since the underlying assumption is that, while they are partially distinctive, there should also be significant overlap. These two factors comprise the Religious Well-Being (RWB) and Existential Well-Being (EWB) subscales of the SWBS. High correlations have been found to exist between the SWBS and both of the subscales (Ellison 1983:331-333).

Also, the test is short, only twenty questions, and, according to Ellison and Smith, "it can be effectively used with anyone who has a meaningful conception of the term God" (1989:39). Further, its reliability and validity have been demonstrated (Bufford, Paloutzian, Ellison 1989:57-58). The scale has been shown, through exploratory research, to illuminate personal growth toward meaning and wholeness, devotional practice, relationship to God, and mystical experience (Ellison N.d.:15). Also, the SWBS is designed to measure spiritual well-being without getting bogged down in specific theological issues or pre-determined standards of well-being (Ellison 1983:332).

The rite of passage ceremony designed for use with this backpacking trip was comprised of seven elements, or stations, designed to "walk" the teenagers, individually and corporately, through the requisite stages for achieving responsible adulthood from a Christian perspective. Following is the ceremony used during the trip (Venable 1995:112-15).

#### PATH TO ADULTHOOD RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY

##### Supplies needed:

- Each teen should have their walking stick and New Testament.
- Enough nail-crosses on leather cords for all participants.
- One sheet large enough to place over the shoulders of the teens.
- Pot of water with wash rag on fire.
- Copies of this rite of passage for all adults.
- Appropriate juice, cup, and bread for Communion.

Have all the teens gathered in one place, away from where the following ceremony will take place. The first five stations of the rite of passage are performed individually with each teen-age backpacker. After all teens have been initiated, proceed with stations six and seven. (All Scripture references below are based on the New International Version, with some modifications for gender and context.)

##### *Station 1 - Putting Away Childish Things*

All adults should be wearing a gold nail-cross. A parent/sponsor should bring in their teen camper with their walking stick and Bible, with the sheet draped over his/her shoulders.

TRIP LEADER: Who is this boy/girl? Why do you bring him/her here before these adults?

PARENT/SPONSOR: You are mistaken! This is no boy/girl! Sunday, when we left home he/she was but a child, but today I present to you and the others an adult who deserves all the freedoms and responsibilities they deserve.

TRIP LEADER: (speaking to the teen) What do you say? Are you a child, or are you an adult?

TEEN: When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put childish ways behind me. (1 Cor. 13:11)

TRIP LEADER: Have you done this? Have you put childish ways behind you?

TEEN: Yes, I have.

TRIP LEADER: (to adults) What do you say? Is this a child, or is this an adult?

ADULTS: We see no child before us. A few days ago, we were not sure, but today we know that (name of teen) is one of us. He/She is truly an adult, and we like what we see in him/her!

#### *Station 2 - Giving God Who I Am*

The parent/sponsor now joins the other adults and the teen is left with the trip leader.

TRIP LEADER: So, you are truly an adult, and we want to honor and respect you as one of us. What will you do with your new freedoms? Will you give God all that you are?

TEEN: Yes I will. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

TRIP LEADER: (Takes teen's walking stick and washes it with water from a pot on the fire.) Your life is purified and has joined with Christ's. You are awesome in His sight!

ADULTS: We, too, give God our very lives, and choose to live for Him!

#### *Station 3 - Dealing with My Sin*

TRIP LEADER: The good news of the Gospel is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) What do you say about the sin in your own life? What will you do with it?

TEEN: I count myself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore I do not let sin reign in my body, nor will I obey its evil desires. I will not offer my body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer myself to God, as one who has been brought from death to life; and I offer the parts of my body to Him as instruments of righteousness. Sin shall not be my master, because I live under God's grace. (Rom. 6:11-14)

TRIP LEADER & ADULTS: In the name and authority of Jesus Christ, we pronounce that you are forgiven in Christ, and offer you His peace for your life. (John 20:23)

TRIP LEADER: (Removes sheet from camper.) You are clean, you are a new creation! (2 Cor. 5:17) You are set free from your sin to go and serve Jesus!

#### *Station 4 - Giving God Who I'm Becoming*

PARENT/SPONSOR: I am proud of (name) and am thankful for the wise choices he/she has made, including his/her decision to give him/herself to Jesus. I think (name) will continue to make wise decisions in the future, and I bless him/her and his/her future in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

TRIP LEADER: You've made it this far, and now as an adult, we believe with God's help you can make it farther still. But I ask you: will you give your future, your spouse, your job, your education, your family, all that you hope to be, to Jesus this day?

TEEN: Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Friends, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12-14)

*Station 5 - Receiving God's Call*

Trip leader moves toward the teen and places a gold nail-cross on a leather cord around his/her neck.

TRIP LEADER: God has called you to serve him and to live faithfully in his will, honoring those around you, and living always for him. This nail-cross lanyard is a symbol to remind you that following Jesus will not always be easy, but you will never be alone. Even when you feel God has left you, you will have many Christian brothers and sisters to lift you up. We will always love and respect you. You have changed our lives, and seeing Jesus in you reminds us how much we love Him, too! (Hug, embrace.)

Now the teen goes to stand with the adults.

*Station 6 - Following Jesus*

After all the teens have been initiated through stations 1-5, proceed with 6 & 7.

TRIP LEADER: It will not always be easy, following Jesus. What will you do, how will you respond when the going gets difficult?

ALL TOGETHER: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Pet. 1:3-9)

TRIP LEADER: The nails in our crosses are to remind us of the hardships of following Jesus. Our nail-cross is gold, however, to remind you of how we are being changed and refined as Jesus walks with us through our trials.

*Station 7 - Holy Communion*

TRIP LEADER: And Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him. (Luke 22:19-22)

After a prayer of consecration, the backpackers may receive Holy Communion.

**FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

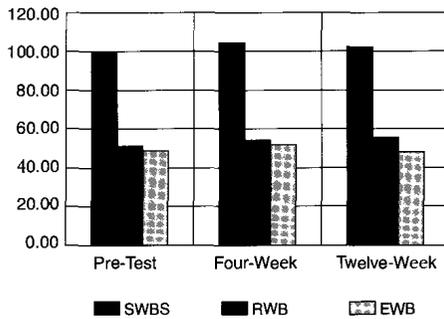
Since there were only eight teenage subjects in this research, the results are viewed as exploratory. Following is a summary of the findings of the research.

Table 1 and Graph 1 below show the average pre-test and four- and twelve-week post-test SWBS, RWB, and EWB scores for all participants.

**TABLE 1**  
Mean Pre-Test, Four- and Twelve-Week  
Post-Test SWBS, RWB, and EWB Scores

N	Scale	Pre-Test	Four-Week	Twelve-Week
8	SWBS	99.50	104.75	102.00
	RWB	50.75	53.13	53.75
	EWB	48.75	51.63	48.25

**GRAPH 1**



All scores rose between the pre-test and the four-week post-test. At the twelve-week post-test, SWBS scores were above the pre-test level, though below the four-week mark, RWB scores continued to rise, and EWB scores fell slightly, dip-

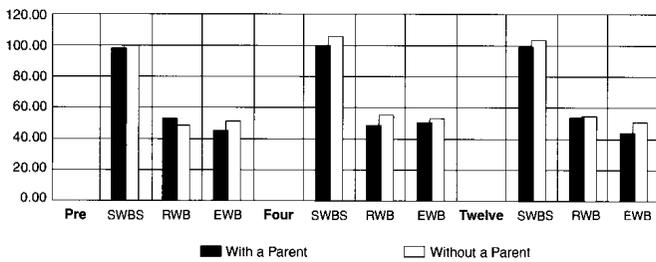
ping half a point below the pre-test level.

Table 2 and Graph 2 show the average SWBS, RWB, and EWB pre-test and four- and twelve-week post-test scores of the three subjects who had a parent serve as a sponsor on the trip and the five who did not have a parent participate.

**TABLE 2**  
 Mean Pre-Test, Four- and Twelve-Week Post-Test SWBS, RWB,  
 and EWB Scores of Subjects with a Parent and  
 Those Without a Parent Participating  
 in the Backpacking Trip

Sample Group	n	Pre-Test	Four-Week	Twelve-Week
With a Parent	3			
SWBS		98.67	100.00	97.33
RWB		53.00	49.67	53.33
EWB		45.67	50.33	44.00
Without a Parent	5			
SWBS		100.00	107.60	104.80
RWB		49.40	55.20	54.00
EWB		50.60	52.40	50.80

**GRAPH 2**



Pre-test SWBS and EWB scores for the backpackers with a parent participating started out

lower than the means of those without a parent participating. The rise from the pre-test to the four-week post-test SWBS means of those subjects who had a parent participating was +1.33, while the rise for those without parental participation was +7.60! For the twelve-week post-test scores of the backpackers with a parent participating, only the RWB subscale rose above the pre-test level, and that by only +.33. For those without a parent participating, the twelve-week post-test means were higher than the pre-test scores for all three subscales.

Among the ten factors mentioned in the post-tests as possible contributors to spiritual growth, the three rated the highest were: the rite of passage ceremony held the final night on the trail, daily quiet times, and evening share times. Typical journal entries which reflected on the rite of passage ceremony included: "It brought me close because I became an adult in front of God." "It helped me realize that I need to grow as a Christian. Just like I don't want to remain a child, I don't want to always be a baby Christian." "I felt loved."

#### CONCLUSION

It would seem that, at least within the confines of the study shown here, there is a possibility for growth in spiritual well-being—transformation, if you will—for adolescents participating in a formal rite of passage process. Much of the growth, especially within the Religious Well-Being subscale, was shown to persist to twelve weeks. Also, those backpackers who did not have a parent participating in the experience seemed to be at an advantage as far as potential for spiritual growth is concerned.

Though much research and experimentation need to be done, the rite of passage structure represents a significant and positive possible resource for transformation for the lives of adolescents, within the context of religious education.

#### NOTES

1. This discussion is based on notes from a lecture with Dr. Donald M. Joy during a doctoral seminar in January 1992. Dr. Joy is professor emeritus of human development at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.

2. Figure 1 is based on a diagram from Zahniser (1991:4). In the one used here, the New Status is shown at a higher level than the Old Status. This change was first illustrated for me by Dr. Donald M. Joy.

3. The following is distilled from my doctoral research (Venable 1995), especially chapters 3, "Design of the Study" and 4, "Findings of the Study."

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