



In Search of Adolescence: A New Look at an Old Idea

Crystal Kirgiss

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Is adolescence really a modern cultural construct, as many have claimed? Author and veteran youth worker Crystal Kirgiss began her journey into the history of adolescence when the fourteenth-century Squire of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* caught her eye. Not a boy, not yet a man the Squire's classic hallmarks of adolescent attitudes and behaviors pushed her to search further and further into historical literature and documents in search of adolescence.

Here Kirgiss offers youth workers a glimpse into the rich history of adolescence from the tenth through the eighteenth century, walking readers through exactly what many deep thinkers, artistic creators, impassioned preachers, and other influencers had to say about this life stage, long before our modern and postmodern incarnations of youth and youth ministry existed.

In Search of Adolescence takes on the revisionist history so widely accepted in the church and the broader culture the history that portrays adolescence itself as a modern invention, an aberration of the way young people were meant to grow up. A winsome writer, a fearless academic, and a brilliant researcher, Crystal Kirgiss unmask the simplistic assumptions we've held for so long about the nature and importance of adolescence.

Like a sharpshooter in a carnival shooting gallery, Crystal's book blows away falsehood after falsehood with perfectly aimed research and totally disarming humor. This book has the potential to make us totally rethink the way we see young people and our work with them.

Mark DeVries Mdiv | @markdevriesYMA

Founder, Ministry Architects - Author of *Sustainable Youth Ministry*

Crystal Kirgiss lays down the gauntlet: If we'd done our homework more carefully, maybe we wouldn't have swallowed the "adolescence-as-recent-social-construct" thesis so readily. With the temerity of a well-armed historian and the compassion of a long-time youth minister, Kirgiss turns conventional theories of childhood on their heads by arguing that adolescence has been around a lot longer than we think. Agree or disagree, *In Search of Adolescence* is a joyous read that turns one of youth ministry's most sacred cows into hamburger.

Kenda Creasy Dean, PhD | @kendacreasydean

Mary D. Synnott Professor of Youth, Church, and Culture Princeton Theological Seminary - Author of *Almost Christian*

As foundational as the notion of adolescence is to the practice of youth ministry, few of us have had the training or done the work to dig into its history. Crystal Kirgiss serves us well in bringing to light how that stage between childhood and adulthood has been understood and addressed in the West for centuries. *In Search of Adolescence* provides solid research and reflective insight into how this season of life change has always been a contextual struggle not only for the adolescents themselves, but for parents, communities, and the church and what it means to encourage and care for those moving through this historically normal stage

of life.

Chap Clark, PhD | @chapclark

Professor of Youth, Family, and Culture; Fuller Theological Seminary - Author of *Hurt 2.0*

Rarely do you find someone who is willing to go against the popular narrative the way Crystal Kirgiss does in this fantastic book. In it, she challenges long-held assumptions and helps carve out a new path for thinking about adolescence. This book truly is a gift to the youth worker community!

Kurt Johnston | @kurtjohnston

Pastor to Students, Saddleback Church - Author of *Middle School Ministry Made Simple*

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Bryant Kelly:

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Cindy Johnson:

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Daryl Church:

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