

Cultural observation project



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

During this second observation at Coastal Grand Mall in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, I learned many things. I went to this location on a Saturday night, where it was full of young people. The weather outside was warm, but rainy, so I believe this caused even more people to look for indoor fun, so the mall was packed on this Saturday night. I began my observation in the food court, which is near the movie theatre. This is definitely a hot spot in the mall for young people. I got something to eat and began to observe.

Most young people were not with their families, but were with their friends instead. School has started back and most tourists have gone home, so most of these young people were locals. This gives me a better idea of what young people in our area are really like, rather than observing tourists from different parts of the country. While I was observing, I noticed a lot of the same things that I noticed during my first observation at the water park. There were lots of young girls who were dressed provocatively and they seemed to be desperate for attention.

I learned that either parents don't mind their daughters dressing this way, or the girls changed after they left home. I wanted to give the girls the benefit of the doubt during my observation at the water park because they were at the beach on vacation, after all. But there is no excuse to dress this way in public. There were many young girls that I wanted to offer to buy them some new clothes! Boys seemed to be trying to gain attention, not by the way they were dressed, but by doing silly things and playing practical jokes on their friends such as pulling the chair out from under his friend before he sat down.

The boys and girls seemed to interact more readily than they did at the water park. There were large groups gathered around the entire food court and they all mingled together and seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Another thing I noticed about the young people at the mall that night was the language they used! I was completely appalled at the way these young people were speaking. As the young people moved about around me, I couldn't believe some of the words that were coming out of their mouths.

I realize that these are young people and they are still trying to figure themselves out and fit in, but I honestly did not realize that young people spoke this way. It was very difficult for me not to speak up at that point and ask them to please not use that type of language. This made me realize the negativity that must be going on in their minds and hearts. This really opened my eyes to the actions of young people that I wasn't aware of. Seeing the way these young people were acting, dressing, and speaking made me realize, to an even greater degree, how important youth ministry is.

These young people broke my heart that night as I realized how lost they must be. Many of them probably didn't grow up in loving homes. Many of them may not even have homes to go to when they left the mall that night. What is truly heartbreaking is that many of them may have never had anyone share the Gospel with them. Their actions that night are only a result of the environment they've grown up in. I tried to imagine the home life some of them came from. As I attempted to look deeper, I wondered which ones have a mother and father to go home to.

I wondered which ones had parents who were in jail or addicted to drugs. I wondered which ones were hungry because their parents couldn't afford to have food in the house. And mostly I wondered which ones were hungry for the love of Jesus Christ. Strategy: (at least two full pages) As I left the mall that night, I had so many ideas running through my mind. I know I have to do something to make a difference in the lives of young people. I just wasn't sure what. The voice of the enemy crept in saying there was nothing I could do, which zapped my enthusiasm.

But as I began to pray about it, the negative thoughts went away and I was able to think more clearly about a plan to reach young people just like the ones I observed at the water park and the mall. First, my plan is to pray fervently and without ceasing for young people all over the world, particularly for those that live in my area. My prayer is for God to begin to soften their hearts so that when the Gospel does reach them, they will be ready and willing to hear and accept it as Truth.

Then as their hearts are softened, I pray that God will send someone to share the Gospel with them. As this happens, I pray that they will listen with an open heart and mind and accept Jesus as their Savior before it is everlasting too late. It is also my prayer that young people who are already Christians will shine their light so brightly that other will see Jesus in them. I believe that this will make a bigger difference in their lives than I ever could myself. I know that God will answer my prayers and this will begin to make a difference in the lives of young people everywhere.

I would like to return to Coastal Grand mall again on a busy weekend night and plan to share the love of Christ with young people. I would mostly like to encourage the young girls to dress more modestly and help them to understand that they are beautiful without showing off too much of their bodies. I would like to tell them that Jesus sees them as precious beings and that they should always remember that and have confidence because of it. One idea I had was to print up some wallet cards to give out to the students that say when they feel ugly, they should remember that they are fearfully and wonderfully made.

When they feel that no one loves them, the card will remind them that God loves them more than life. When they feel all alone and that no one understands them, it will tell them that God will never leave them or forsake them. I want young people everywhere to know that God has a plan for their life. In trying to come up with ideas for an event to reach more young people like the ones I observed in the mall, I think the best idea would be to form a huge youth event at our church.

We could enlist the help of our current students and send them out into places like the mall, their schools, and football games with invitations. We could challenge them to focus on the lost and not just their friends who are already in another church. We would want them to invite the UN-churched. The purpose of the youth event would be to tell the students about the love of Christ and teach them how they can feel that love and show them that they don't have to walk around lost anymore.

The goal would be to ultimately lead them to salvation, but if we could just get them there and plant a seed, that would be wonderful. Of course, to get them there, we would have to plan a really great event. Before the event, we would have a gathering of all youth leaders for a time of prayer. It would be our prayer that many young people will leave that night CHANGED in the name of Jesus! We would have to plan for music, which could include a Contemporary Christian praise and worship band.

We would also have to plan to serve them food—because what teenager doesn't love to eat?! But mostly, we would have to focus on the message and what can be spoken into the lives of these young people that will make a difference. This assignment truly opened my eyes to the need to reach out to young people everywhere. We tend to focus on the students that are in our church, but we forget about those that are out there in a lost and dying world. It is my prayer that, with the help of God and my church, we can make a difference in the lives of people everywhere.