

**Audience questions from the ICMDA webinar with  
Prof John Whitehall - The teenage brain and decision making  
16 February 2023**

1. Steven: According to research, the immature brain is also highly malleable. Would you care to comment on the significance of cerebral plasticity in this arena?
2. Anonymous: Thank you for your presentation, in particular your critical analysis of the concept of Gillick competence. The fact that there may not be a (yet identifiable) functional substrate (on MRI) for this does not mean that the concept itself is suspect, even if it was developed in the context of under-age sexual activity and access to contraception. Your quote from the apostle Paul refers of course in its context to spiritual growth - would you want to defend that a teenager or adolescent is incapable of that as well? I am specifically thinking of the age we would expect them to be able to make a considered profession of faith (e.g. in churches of the Baptist persuasion), arguably a weightier decision than one relating to medical treatment, which would equally require the intellectual and emotional faculties you mentioned to be in harmony.
3. Jerry: We know that Adam's rebellion affected every part of creation. For years I've heard that homosexuality is either just a demonic presence or a product of environment. Are people born with homosexuality as their default?
4. Anonymous: What can we do to reverse the detrimental effects on the adolescent brain?
5. Angel: In the history of missions in Asia, many influential missionaries, Christian doctors or pastors from Western Europe and the United States made important decisions in their lives when they were young - do you think their brain systems or spirits had met, what is your opinion?