

# The Challenge of Our Young People

## Introduction

- I. How long does it take to lose a culture from a Christian, godly, perspective?
  - a. It only takes one generation.
  
- II. God instructed His people over and over again to make sure they train up the next generation
  - a. For example, in Joshua 4, God parted the Jordan River so the Israelites could cross over into the Promised Land.
  - b. Joshua was commanded by God to take up 12 stones from the riverbed to set up a memorial.
  - c. **Joshua 4:21-24**
    - i. Whenever they saw the stones they were to remember what the Lord had done.
    - ii. When their children saw it, and asked what it was about, the parents were to teach their children about the Lord.
    - iii. So the stones not only reminded the parents of what God did, but they reminded the parents of their responsibility to teach their children of God
  - d. When we turn to the next book, **Judges 2:10-12** we find a sad statement:
    - i. *“Another generation arose who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.”*
    - ii. After Joshua and his generation had passed, the next generation left the Lord to serve idols.
    - iii. It took only one generation to lose the spiritual legacy that should have been passed on.
  
- III. Certainly this is some of what we’re seeing today.
  - a. All the statistics and polls are showing the same thing: our young people are leaving the Lord and His church
    - i. A poll from Lifeway reported that 70% of young adults drop out of the church
    - ii. David Kinnaman, connected with the Barna Research group reported that “18-29 year olds are the black hole of church attendance. Over all there is a 43% drop-off between the teen and early adult years in terms of church attendance.
  - b. Our young people are leaving.
    - i. At first this may just sound staggering statistics
    - ii. But this all becomes very personal when we can attach a name or a face to these numbers – someone we know, someone from our congregation, someone from our home.
  
- IV. What is causing these young people to leave the Lord/His church? What can we do about it?
  - a. It is important to ask these questions often, and to consider what can be done, as homes, as a congregation.

- b. To not ask these questions and seek answers is to accept defeat – the loss of some soul to the world.
- c. Tonight we're going to consider what are reasons the young people are leaving, and what can we do about it

### **Reason Why They're Leaving**

- I. Let's consider some reasons as to why our young people are leaving the Lord and His church:
  - a. Its important to remember that there can be many reasons and factors as to why they leave. Here are a few:

### **II. Significant Questions/Doubts**

- a. Our young people have lots of questions:
  - i. Questions about God, His nature, His works,
  - ii. Questions about the Bible, where it came from, how we know it to be God's word
  - iii. Questions about evolution, science, and creation
  - iv. Questions about morals, ethics, right and wrong,
- b. When these questions go unanswered:
  - i. Doubt arises in their heart – doubting what they've been taught, doubting what the Bible teaches
  - ii. They seek the answer – it may be through friends, the internet, a teacher or professor
- c. Remember Paul called the church a pillar and support of the truth (**1 Tim. 3:15**)
  - i. We need to provide Biblical, thoughtful answers to their questions, and not brush them off.
  - ii. They're looking for truth, and we need to help them with it.

### **III. Churches Trying to Be Relevant**

- a. Some churches recognize this rise in drop out from our young people, so their solution is to make the church, preaching, classes all relevant
  - i. They try to appeal to the young people through fun and games.
  - ii. Bible classes are watered down, or replaced with story telling
  - iii. In all of this, no deep studying of the Bible is accomplished.
  - iv. Instead of equipping our young people in the Word, the aim is to entertain them – as long as they're coming.
- b. Not only are there serious problems with this Biblically, from a practical standpoint it is not effective.
  - i. Young people are leaving because churches have turned to a more watered down, entertainment aim service or class
  - ii. Young people are hungry for truth – the want a sincere deep study of the Bible – they want to be challenged.
  - iii. They not only need to learn about the Bible – why they believe what they believe – but they need to be equipped to handle the strong pull of the world.

1. The pull of Satan and the world is strong, especially against young people. They need to know how to overcome those temptations –
2. They need to know the difference between right and wrong, and what God expects of them.

iv. Don't try and change the church to appeal to young people like the world.

1. If we try to make the church like Disney, they'll come, have a good time, but leave empty, starving, and vulnerable
2. Instead our focus ought to be on glorifying God as His word teaches, and trying to help all people come to better know and follow God's Words.

#### IV. Hypocrisy Among Christians

- a. This is one of the leading reasons listed by many as to why they have left the church.
  - i. Even one at our congregation admitted that he had 4 friends leave the church due to this very reason
- b. When Christians claim to belong to God on Sunday, but act as if they don't know Him the rest of the week – it does great harm not only to God, but to the church.
  - i. **Rom. 2:23-24** – the name of God is blasphemed among you
- c. While this is not a reason to leave the Lord, or His church (as we'll look at in a moment), it does bring up a sobering thought:
  - i. Is the way I live helping or hurting my brethren in their walk with the Lord?
    1. Am I giving them a faithful and encouraging example to follow?
    2. Am I showing them that what the Bible teaches, what we do in our worship together, really doesn't matter?
    3. Do I use language during the week that I would never use in worship?
    4. Do I wear clothes that would be inappropriate during the week (immodest)?
    5. Do I ever talk about God? Read the Bible? Pray?
    6. Do I ever reach out to the brethren, trying to help them any way I can?
- d. Most certainly the way we live can be something which helps and encourages, or hurts and discourages ones walk with the Lord.

- V. Now, it must be said that the church is ultimately not responsible for one's faith and relationship with the Lord.
  - a. I cannot expect the church to maintain and keep my faith going.
  - b. My faith must be real and personal – I must take the daily steps of reading, studying, praying, devotion.
  - c. I must reach out and make good friendships and commit to them
  - d. Sometimes we can easily point our fingers at the church:
    - i. We blame Bible class, sermons and preachers, as a reason the young people have no faith.
    - ii. The reason they have no faith ultimately goes back to them, and choices they've made.

iii. Certainly the church can be a source of help or hindrance in this matter – but the church is not to blame for young people not with the Lord.

- e. **Rev. 3:4** shows us an example of a dead church in which there were a few faithful members
- i. This reminds us that just because a church isn't what God intended it to be, that is no excuse for me not to be who God wants me to be.
  - ii. I am responsible for my faith, and my soul, and I need to do my best to grow closer to God in whatever place or state I'm in.

VI. What's the answer? What can we do to help our young people remain with the Lord?

### Shape their Hearts for Discipleship (Not Finished)

- I. What is our aim, our goal for these young people?
  - a. We want them to be good – and to do good things – but that's not our ultimate goal
  - b. We want them to come to services – to come to Bible studies and participate – but that's not our ultimate goal
  - c. We want them to choose good friends, to ultimately choose a good mate, to work hard and honest and school and on the job – we want all these things but they are not the ultimate goal.
- II. Our aim is not for good young people to fill the pews – our desire out to be for our young people to be true committed disciples of Jesus.
  - a. **Luke 9:23** – each day committed to Jesus
    - i. That's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, a real follower of Jesus – total commitment
      1. Jesus comes before my family
      2. Jesus comes before my friends
      3. Jesus comes before my job, my school, my hobbies,
      4. Jesus comes before all else.
    - ii. **Col. 1:18** – first place in all things
  - b. So when I make a decision – where I will go, what I will do, what language I will use, what people I'll spend time with – Jesus comes first – I am a committed disciple of Jesus
  - c. **Story of Chris Spielman (7 Words, 142)**
  - d. That's what we want to help shape their hearts towards – a true, deep, committed relationship with Jesus
    - i. The Lord comes first, and I'll show that in how I live!

### Godly Homes

- I. One of the most important factors in a child's relationship with God is a godly home.
  - a. Not perfect homes. Not homes with no drama, issues or problems. Those don't exist
    - i. We're talking homes that put God first.
    - ii. We're talking about homes where the Bible is opened, read, studied and discussed as a family
    - iii. We're talking about homes where prayer is offered more than just for food. That the family prays together, and often

- iv. We're talking about homes where God's law is valued – language, dress, hobbies, interests – they all keep to God's Word
  - v. We're talking about homes that mention the name of God, and Jesus often. His name is not something foreign or strange. God is talked about naturally (thanking, pointing to, etc.)
  - vi. We're talking about homes that worship God besides on just Sunday and Wednesday (singing, devotionals)
- b. No, its not perfect. Yes, every family has drama. Yes there will be problems, hard days, difficult times – but the running thread is that Jesus is the center of our home
- i. It is the emphatic statement – **Josh. 24:15** – we will serve the Lord
  - ii. No if, ands or buts – God will be honored in my home.
- II. A godly home is one where parents set the example for their children:
- a. One of your most influential forms of teaching will be through the way you live – the example you set
    - i. “baking pan – that’s the way momma did it”
  - b. Through the way you live, your words and your deeds, you are teaching your children:
    - i. What it means to be a Christian
    - ii. What is most important in your life
    - iii. How to love their future mate
    - iv. How to handle difficult circumstances
    - v. How to worship God
    - vi. How to be honest and admit your fault when you're wrong; to apologize and seek forgiveness
    - vii. What it means to be a devoted disciple of Christ
- III. Prov. 22:6 – train up a child in the way he should go
- a. How can I help our young remain faithful with the Lord – make God a part of their daily life – of their home
  - b. Train them up in the way they should go
- IV. You can never start too early, but you can wait until it's too late! Start now!

### Churches That Equip

- I. **Eph. 4:11-16**
  - a. Paul explained here that the purpose of these positions of leadership in a congregation is to equip all saints. It brings up a great question – are the young in our congregation equipped?
    - i. Equipped in the Word?
    - ii. Equipped in service to God?

### b. Give opportunities to learn

- i. Bible classes that engage them in the Scriptures
- ii. Devotionals/studies during the week/month

- iii. Are there resources available to the young people that they can look to for help in their studies/questions (website, articles, tracts, time with the preacher/elders)?
- iv. Maybe even consider having a weekend meeting designed just for them addressing topics that are fitting to them.

#### c. Opportunities for service

- i. Young Christian men able to lead in worship (starts young)
- ii. Young women to teach the small children bible classes
- iii. Take them to the shut ins, or out visiting older members
- iv. Give them jobs to help out around the congregation

#### d. Opportunities to connect with other young people

- i. Those relationships are so vital.
- ii. 1 Cor. 15:33 rings true – the influences we surround ourselves with make a difference.
- iii. Perhaps can some in this congregation open your home to let the young people get together outside of the assemblies and to build better relationships/friendships?
- iv. Are there other congregations in town, near by, that have young people these can meet and connect with?

### Raise Expectations

- I. Have you ever heard someone use the phrase, “the young will be young...”
  - a. I’ve heard it said about those are uninterested in the Lord (oh they’re just young...)
  - b. I’ve heard it said about those who
  
- II. Expectations for young are at an all time low
  - a. Our young people are capable of rising to the high expectations that God has of them:
    - i. They are capable of making big decisions
    - ii. They are capable of owning up to their choices
    - iii. They are capable of great things
  
- III. If we hold our young people to low expectations, they’ll hit it. Let’s raise our expectations:
  - a. In our Bible classes – give homework, memory verses
    - i. Perhaps, instead of just giving them the answers (this is this because...) help them to understand why. Give them questions. Help them to learn how to learn.
    - ii. Go deep. Challenge them. Help them to grow in their studying of the word.
    - iii. Help them to see that Bible study can be fun – make it interactive,
    - iv. **Luke 24:32** – our hearts burning with in us
    - v. There can be great passion and excitement in Bible studying, in understanding the Scriptures.
  
  - b. In their choices – raise the expectations for how they live
    - i. Certain behavior, words, clothes, hobbies are not acceptable
    - ii. Young people can contribute. They can help their parents. They can help others.
    - iii. Its ok to expect their best
      - 1. In school, in sports/hobbies, at their job
      - 2. They may not be the valedictorian, the college recruit, but they aren’t succumbing to laziness. They’re learning how to live with excellence (**Ecc. 9:10**)
  
    - iv. Its ok to expect their best in godliness
      - 1. They will stumble. They will make mistakes.

2. But they are learning what is most important in life, and how to live a God honoring life.

## Two Final Thoughts

### I. To our older members

- a. You might be a parent, a member of this congregation:
  - i. We've often said that the youth are the church of tomorrow. If that is true that makes them the responsibility of today.
  - ii. Don't wait until they're older to talk about Jesus, their faith, their commitment to God (**Pv. 22:6** – when he is young)
  - iii. Don't wait until their older to use them in service to God.
- b. God didn't wait to use young people for great tasks
  - i. David was a shepherd made into a King
  - ii. Joseph was a young man taken from home yet used in the saving of his people
  - iii. Josiah was a young king who sought the Lord at 16 and helped turned the nation around, helped them come to follow God.
- c. Let's seek after our young people.
  - i. Invest in them; Pray for them; Be patient with them; Use their wonderful talents.

### II. To our young people

- a. We are young.
- b. Because we are young we have lots of energy, strength, ideas.
  - i. Don't let that go to waste.
    1. Don't waste your time, your life on worthless things.
  - ii. In your youth, seek after God (**Ecc. 12:1**)
  - iii. You are young:
    1. You have open doors to talk to our friends
    2. You have the chance to build great habits
- c. Don't be like the many who are leaving God
  - i. Ground yourself in this Word.
  - ii. We might be looking at future preachers, elders, deacons, teachers, mothers and fathers, pillars in this church
  - iii. All that is up to you.
- d. 1 John 2:14 - you are strong
  - i. you are capable of doing great things with the Lord
  - ii. You...in your youth...make a difference for God. Seek after God.
    1. Remember: You are meant for more – glory to God, making a difference for Christ.