

Daily Readings

Fear, as FDR noted in 1933, paralyzes those who succumb to it. As we look at the dangers of teen life today, parents will feel a deep sense of fear and foreboding. Will my child be one of the victims? But we have the promises of the Lord of all Creation. God through Jesus Christ offers victory and restoration to all those who call on him. These passages have to do with the images of salvation through Jesus Christ. Have you accepted Christ into your life as both Lord and Savior? Monday through Thursday you will explore each image. Friday we celebrate what God has done for us in Jesus the Christ. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, May 24 – Read Mark 10:45 — The scene is a slave market or a prison camp. There are those who have lost their freedom. They are being sold into slavery. Someone steps up to pay the price or gives the ransom money to purchase their freedom or to redeem them. How have you been held captive in your life? Can you accept the ransom Jesus has paid with his life?

Tuesday, May 25 – Read Mark 3: 23-27 — The scene is a battlefield. God and Satan are at war for our possession. Christ is the warrior of God who invades the realm of Satan. On Good Friday, Jesus gave his life for us in the battle for our soul. On Easter morning God triumphed over the enemy and delivered us from death to life, from darkness to life. Where is the war for your soul being waged in your life?

Wednesday, May 26 – Read Matthew 26: 26-29 — The scene is a religious place with a bloody altar where sacrifices are offered. The priest comes to make a sacrifice to atone for the people's sin. Blood is shed and a life is offered up. But in this image the priest sacrifices himself. Jesus lets his own blood be shed in order to make peace again between the people and God. In what ways can you show gratitude to God for the sacrifice of Jesus?

Thursday, May 27 – Read Romans 5: 6-11 — The scene is a courtroom. We have been found guilty. The sentence is death. But a righteous man who has obeyed the law perfectly comes and stands beside us, takes the death sentence upon himself, and suffers the consequences of our guilt. Order is restored. We no longer have to fear the Judge, but are free to go out to begin a new life. What is separating you from accepting the new life that God has offered in Jesus Christ?

Friday, May 28 – Read Isaiah 53 — As you begin this day, read this scripture as a prayer of thanksgiving for what God has done in Jesus Christ.



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, May 23, 2010

Wake Up Call

Sleepwalking (Week 1 of 3)

1 Samuel 3:1-10 — *The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)*

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.' "So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Samuel

Samuel was the last and greatest of the judges of Israel. The judges were given the authority to administer cases by interpreting the God's Law. In some cases, the judges were military leaders who organized Israel's army to fight against its enemies. They did not rule as a king would rule, but rather left community leadership to the family and tribal patriarchs. This system existed between the time of Joshua and David. Each of the judges considered God the ultimate King of Israel.

During the time of Samuel, the people cried out for a King to rule similar to the kings that ruled the nations around Israel. Samuel proclaimed that God was the only king that Israel needed and refused. Reluctantly, God instructed Samuel to anoint a king. Samuel anointed first Saul and then David as the first Kings of Israel. As the history of Israel unfolds, the Kingdom period was a time of political and military growth for Israel, but a religious disaster. In the end, the nation was divided and defeated. God never intended God's people to the kingdom in itself – the people who longed for a king, lost sight of the Kingdom of God and the reign of God's law for all people.

The Call of Samuel

Samuel's "call story" in chapter 3 begins with an interesting claim, *"the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions."* This word is a warning for every age. When we cut off the word of the Lord and the divine presence it brings, life can get a little crazy. Yet, that is what we have done in our current society. Our search for meaning has turned into a search for happiness. The result is a cultural crisis among our teens like we have never seen. But here is the good news — God does not abandon God's people. God will continue to prepare those like Samuel to keep the light of God bright for all to see. Who will be the next Samuel in our church?

The Difference for Samuel

Chapter 3 of Samuel outlines three distinct advantages that Samuel had in his development in spite of the challenges of his day. First, Samuel had a Godly mother who was willing to pray for her son and expose him to the ways of God. He had parental influence and love. Second, Samuel had a spiritual mentor. Eli was the current high priest and took the time to teach Samuel not only the Law of God, but also how to be spiritually tuned to God. Eli saw in Samuel the potential that would eventually be realized as Samuel eventually takes Eli's place of authority. Third, Samuel had faith, who, like his godly mother, seeks for and listens to God and is willing to do what such listening requires. He will grow to be a man of deep faith and steady leadership in Israel.

The Greatest Danger to Overcome

The greatest threat to our teens today is underage drinking. Yet, drinking among our young adults is more prevalent than ever. More than half of high school seniors have had a drink in the last month. Many admit to experiencing their first drink in junior high.

In most studies, **underage drinking is the primary contributor to all other risk taking activities**. In addition, since the brain does not completely mature until well after their 20th birthday, the risk of alcohol-related issues as adults are likely. For example, it takes only six months of underage drinking to develop alcoholic type symptoms in most teens. For each year that the start of drinking is delayed, the risk of later alcohol dependence is reduced by 14%.

What is the Problem?

USA Today reports three factors lead to teen drinking, drug use, sexual activity, depression and self-destructive behavior.

- **Stress**
- **Boredom**
- **Too much spending money**

Teens today are under incredible pressure to perform academically, socially, athletically and artistically. Our society has taught us that our value is associated with how we produce or perform. The Lewisville School District, (especially Marcus and Flower Mound) is one of the highest performance school districts in DFW. Of course, this is a good thing, unless it goes unmonitored without guidance and counsel.

Yet, many teens have available time on their hands with nothing to do. This generation has been brought up in a "keep them involved" often "high-pressure" system that leaves them with the inability to handle "time with nothing to do." When self-worth is found in the performance of a task or performance, what happens when there is nothing to do? When youth ministers in our area were surveyed, they sighted boredom as the #1 reason why local kids drink or use drugs.

Finally, teens with more than \$50 versus \$15 a week in spending money are three times as likely to try tobacco, more than twice as likely to try alcohol, and almost four times as likely to try marijuana. The average high school teen in the Flower Mound/Highland Village area has more than \$90 of spending money a week from work-related or allowance-related income. The youth ministers surveyed in our area claim this number is actually much higher.

What is the ANSWER?

It may be surprising to some, but both secular and religious studies show that what we learn in Samuel's experience is the best solution.

• **Religious involvement** – Abundant research from various top-level universities and government agencies to research institution like the Barna Group documents that active church participation is the key to raising well-adjusted, happy children who have a life-long moral compass and avoid the typical pitfalls of the teenage years. When researchers try to isolate "what works" in terms of raising children, invariably they find this key; "active participation" in a "faith community."

• **Godly parental involvement** – The Barna study found that a "symbiotic partnership" between parents and the church is essential for children's well-being. It's important for children from an early age to see their parents

practicing their faith and sharing it with the family. A 2000 study by Journal of Applied Development Psychology explains just how important both doing and explaining are when it comes to influencing our children toward our own values and beliefs. Further, in a study done by Sean Clarkin, published by the "Partnership for a Drug-Free America," says "Kids cite parents as the No. 1 reason why they either do or don't do drugs and alcohol."

• **Godly mentors** – Who are the role models for our children today? Who are they watching? What are they seeing? Studies site that positive role models from church, school and extra-curricular activities who show high Christian values gain the highest respect from teens. Especially younger kids are like sponges watching to see if Christians are genuine in what they say and do. Further, parents need the help, support, advice and mentoring of other parents who have been there before.

Final Word of Advice

Parents —

- Monitor your kids stress, ability to handle boredom and extra spending money. The earlier you start, the easier it will be when the kids get older
- Make sure they are involved in a faith community – not just attending church, but involved.
- Talk to your kids about their faith, stress, money, alcohol, drugs, and the weather. Whatever it takes, talk. Be honest.

Teens —

- Listen to you parents and spend time talking with them about their experiences as a teenager. You might learn something.
- Trust your parents to love you no matter what happens. Ask your parents this question: Would you love me no matter what?
- The greatest gift you can give to yourself is get involved in church.

The Rest of Us —

- You may not believe this, but everyone can make a difference. Go out of your way to make a friend that is a young person or a parent. Invite them out to dinner or lunch just to talk.
- Volunteer in some way to help in some children or youth ministry. These are not just religious surveys – they are secular surveys telling us that the hope for our future is in the church. We need everyone. Our society has reached a crisis boiling point.
- Find a young person, make friends and pray daily for them. Let them know that you are praying for them – that you are always available no matter what.

Next week we continue this series by looking at the life of Daniel and the challenges that teens face today that have never been present in our culture before. Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did. God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.

TRIETSCH'S WAKE-UP CALL COVENANT

- I will pray with/for my kids/youth and the kids/youth of this church this week.
- I will bring the community of Christ into my community this week by showing kindness and love to others I encounter in my day to day life.
- I will dedicate an hour this week to spend with my family without the presence of any electronic communications or other distractions.