



THE STATE — OF THE — YOUTH

MARCH 2024

412 LATELY

Happy early Spring!



*-Playing Happy Salmon before
AXIS with the chat.*



-UNO Tournament during AfterLife.

We are now in the full swing of the Spring activities in the 412 Student Ministry! February was so much fun finally coming out of the snowy/icy season we just had. We kicked off February with the first AfterLife of the year which was also our first ever UNO Tournament. I mean come on, who doesn't love a little competitive UNO!? Congrats to Sara Childers for taking home that win.

In February we rounded out our series on 'Authentic' talking about how the life we live and the walk we have with Christ is the most authentic thing that we can offer the world. We discussed having an authentic faith, an authentic love, an authentic peace, and an authentic hope. All of these things are what the world is looking for and we have that to offer them. I really loved teaching through this series and I think our students had some very interesting insights and engagement with the topics. These teenagers rock!

After finishing up that series we moved right into our Easter series for this year titled 'Dust to Dust'. These five weeks are going to be all about looking inwardly at ourselves and realizing the need that we have for a savior as we prepare to celebrate easter in just a few weeks. We have already covered the topics of Repentance as we looked at the importance of ridding ourselves of sin and the importance of turning to God for our ultimate satisfaction in life. We have also talked about Mortality... Yes, you read that right. Mortality. you may think, 'Why

in the world are we thinking about dying during the Easter season? That is exactly the question I posed to the students, ‘Why should we think about death during this time of year?’ And the discussion we had about it was awesome. We saw in the Book of Ecclesiastes that there is no way to appreciate the eternal life we have in Christ without first recognizing the reality of our death which will soon come for all of us. We will all die, but as followers of Jesus we have a beautiful hope that after death we will not experience the second, eternal, death because of the work Christ on our behalf.

I love the Easter season and I’m so excited for the next few weeks of talking about these hard topics. I can’t wait to update you next month on how our series rounds out and what the Lord is going to teach us through it!



CHRISTIANITY IS BACK!

As the iconic group Thin Lizzy so famously said... The Boys Are Back in Town! “What boys?” you might ask. Well not really any boys... And really not any person... However, there is an interesting phenomenon happening amongst Hollywood and celebrity culture in general. Christianity is becoming cool again!

Now as much as I would like that statement to be true, let’s not jump to conclusions too quickly and think about what is actually

GEN Z LINGO

“Chat”; noun. - Your friend group or people you hang around in a certain setting.

Context is key for the *chat*, but these are the people you talk to either at school, work, family, or sports team. Stems from social media and the group chats that young people have with their friends.

“I’m going to see a movie with *chat*.”

“The *chat* is wanting to hanging out this weekend.”

GEN Z LINGO

“Op”; noun - A person who is in opposition to you or your idea. Can also be used in context of a snitch or a troll online/the *chat*.

Stems from the word oppose or opposition.

Stephen: “I don’t think your parents would be too happy about you doing that”

Tilly: “Oh come on, don’t be an *op*.”

happening in popular culture.

There has always been a trend in the way celebrities act and speak that correlate with how that generation’s youth think. Is it because celebrities are influencing the youth, or that celebrities are jumping on the trends of the youth? The importance of understanding the influence on our kids and teenagers is something that we talked about several months ago here on The State of The Youth. We discussed and thought about how what medias our kids are taking can shape how they view the world. However, in the age of social media, the correlation between how this generation’s youth think, and how celebrities act are becoming more and more closely aligned. It is not so obvious anymore of who is influencing who.

There are two separate phenomenons happening that I would like to look at with you, beginning with a caveat. The caveat is that when we look at the data collected by groups like Barna and Christianity Today, surveys show that faith and belief in God are at an all time low in our youngest generations. I even spoke about this last month and how it seems that we are raising up missionaries in the schools. However, there is a small subset of popular youth culture that is always looking for some way to be different. Teenagers are looking for their identity, they are always looking for a place to stand out and be special. And in a world where secular culture has gone almost completely to affirming and celebrating any kind of lifestyle *except* following Jesus, there are now fewer ways to stand out and be “radical”, if you will. As I just mentioned, the need to stand out and be different is so dominant in youth culture it is almost a given that the pendulum will swing back in the direction of whatever is *not* currently popular. And what is not currently popular?? Being a Christian! And so in an effort to be different and stand out amongst their peers, there is a movement of teenagers *GOING TO CHURCH!*

On the other side of this discussion, we are also seeing more and more celebrities and Hollywood actors speaking out and championing being a Christian. People such as Russel Brand, Chris Pratt, Shia Lebof, Justin Bieber, Kirk Cousins, and Stephen Curry are all amongst some of Americas top celebrities right now that are publicly owning their faith. But is this any different than in past decades and generations? Is this actually a movement happening in American

celebrities or is there another explanation?

Now before we get our hopes up and start thinking that the Youth Pastor is about to become the most popular person in town, there is more for us to consider here. As we think about the influences these people have on our teenagers today. Is it because there is a revival happening amongst teenagers and popular celebrities? Maybe. Praise God if so! Yet, we need to remember the new prevalence of social media in our time that has never been around before in history. Never in past generations have celebrities who turn to the faith been able to have such access to the media. In the past, secular culture would weed them out and they would have no voice, but this is not the case anymore. Perhaps this is why we are seeing such a rise of it in pop culture. Although there may normally be a correlation between celebrity influence and youth culture, it does not seem that either of them are happening for the same reasons. Only time will tell.

So what does this mean then for you? You, who are raising preteens in a world where trends and influences ebb and flow so rapidly. This is where having a solid foundation is going to be key. Your future teenager is going to see these trends and watch these celebrities, and whether they like it or not, will be tempted to ebb and flow with them. It is important that they know the truths found in scripture and what following Jesus really looks like. If they have that kind of foundation going into these pivotal years of their life, the bible tell sus they are going to be able to discern what is real and what is not. They will be able to notice true faith when they see it and not be fooled by thinking they have to do this or that to be cool or different. I and the rest of the church are here because God has given your family a resource and solid place to stand on when building this foundation. I am praying for you and your family. God Bless!

Following His Lead,

Stephen Yates

Associate Pastor of Students and Young Adults



THEOLOGY 101

The Church – The new identity of the people of God established by the work of Christ and run by the leadership of Christ. Often considered the ‘Body of Christ’ because the Church consists of people who have received the Holy Spirit and follow the way of Jesus.

Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 2:19-22.

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 2:9-10