



THE STATE — OF THE — YOUTH

OCTOBER 2023

412 LATELY

Well the 2023-24 school year has had an amazing start! Everyone has of course headed back to school and I am so excited to see what the Lord is going to do through our Student Ministry this year. What I am most excited about is the broad ranges of schools that we have represented in our group. Among them are Jacksonville, Sylvan Hills, Cabot, E-Stem, Baptist Prep, and even homeschool co-ops. What an amazing mission field we've been given!

In Bible Study on Sunday mornings we have started back our in depth discussions on Hebrews. It has been so great to see the teenagers engaging with the very texts that the pastor is preaching from the pulpit each week. In AXIS on Wednesday nights, we started a six-week series through the life and ministry of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Let me tell you, I have enjoyed teaching these lessons SO MUCH! From daily provision, to justice, and even depression and suicide, the things we learn about God and our walk with him from these two men is simply unparalleled. It is going to be sad to see this series come to a close, but I am excited to see how it affects the lives of our teenagers in the months to come.

The teenagers attended Reality Check at the beginning of the month, which is an annual event put on by the youth groups in the NPBA. It was an amazing time of worship with other youth groups, prayer for our schools, and preaching from Bro. Dennis Blackerby.



-Summer O'Dell competing in a game at Reality Check.



-Axolotl

We also I had our first Afterlife of the year! Afterlife is a special Wednesday night where we stick around after AXIS with a fun event and snacks! This month we played Pickleball, and according to the teenagers, this was the genesis of our church league team, The Axolotls... The things these kids come up with. (If you don't know what an Axolotl is I have provided a photo above, you're welcome)



JOEY, JESUS, AND TODAY'S MEANING CRISIS

As a super fan of the greatest sitcom to ever air on television, *Friends*, I find myself making references and quotes from the show on the regular. Which means, when I'm confronted with the reality of death and our imminent mortality as humans, I am almost immediately reminded of Joey Tribbiani's stance on the matter. When Monica and Ross finish explaining to the rest of the friends the peculiar situation with their grandmother passing away, they each take turns explaining what they believe to happen to us after death. Finally, Joey rebuttals everyone saying, "See, I don't believe any of that. When you're dead you're dead. You're gone. You're worm food. [depressed silence]..." Then he of course commences to making a very Joey kind of joke.

GEN Z LINGO

"Rizz"; noun. - Synonymous with "Charisma". When someone is very charming or good with people, especially in a flirting or dating scenario. One needs good *rizz* if they want someone else to like them. Rizz can also be helpful in most other social situations when you want to impress someone.

Example: 1. "He's got that *rizz*." (He is very charming.) 2. "How's your *rizz*?" (Are you good with words when talking to the opposite gender?)

GEN Z LINGO

“Thought they ate”; phrase - When someone fails at trying to do what they hoped to accomplish.

Oftentimes when someone tells a joke that is not good, or tries to attempt some action that is not as good as they thought.

Example: 1. Stephen says a joke in his sermon and no one laughs “*He thought he ate*” (Stephen’s joke failed) 2. A video of someone singing but they actually don’t sound very good “*Thought she ate that*” (She thinks she can sing but she actually cannot)

“As Christians, and followers of Jesus we know that there is indeed an afterlife. An eternity that will be spent in one of two places – Heaven or Hell.”

Something that is not news to any of you reading this is that our culture is moving farther and farther from God. It may not be the case that people individually are any farther from God. But it is quite obvious that society as a whole is moving to it being the norm at a rapid pace. But what is the reason for this, almost abrupt, shift in thinking within the last few decades? Well I think it may have something to do with the way Joey thinks. Let’s take a momentary walk back in history, shall we?

Until the recent past, human history has been dominated by the idea and preparation of what we can start by calling the afterlife. Before modern education and technology, people were confronted almost every day with their mortality. Life was precious, especially when the average life expectancy was 55 years old. However, even more precious to people was the idea of what happened after we died. Humans have always known that life on earth is short, and so the hope of an afterlife has always been there. As Christians and followers of Jesus we know that there is indeed an afterlife. An eternity that will be spent in one of two places – Heaven or Hell. Since the days of Jesus, the Christian view of the afterlife has been the dominant view of the world, especially in the West. Yet recently that tide is turning, and faster everyday.

As this continues to become more and more the majority, with no hint of slowing down, this type of thinking is making its way down to our youth and teenagers. Young people everywhere are quickly becoming desensitized to meaning and purpose in the world. Let’s call it what it is, Nihilism. But what is causing this wave of nihilistic thinking and living? Well I think it has a lot to do with Joey’s view of death. If we do not care about what happens to us after we die, or if we agree with Joey, it makes sense to live your life how you want, or as Proverb 21 says, “what is right in your own eyes”. This is a scary path that our culture is walking down, yet I believe there is still hope; and believe it or not, I think it starts with our teenagers.

You see, kids view the world in a very hopeful and bright way. There are infinite experiences and happiness they are excited to find out there. But as their life experience develops into their teenage years, they are not giving up all hope on the world, if anything they see the mark they need to make on it. Despite the negative influences they have all over the place from school to social media, they still see meaning and hope in the world. It is not until they are young adults, well into their twenties, that so many are giving up on a greater purpose for the world. One that is found in God's great plan for human flourishing.

So what do we do about this and how can you begin to talk to your preteen about this? It starts with understanding why this problem exists, and it's because we have a meaning crisis in the world. Too many people have dropped the idea that there is a greater meaning to the world. What stance does your home take on the meaning of life? Do your kids know that the adults in their life believe that there is an afterlife? Do they know that the adults in their life believe in God and Heaven? Do they know the Biblical purpose of life and God's love for them? I think these are very easy things to begin to implement into your weekly rhythms that will pay an exponential return on investment. There is meaning and a purpose to life, and it is to love and be loved by God. My prayer for you this month is that not only do you find meaning and purpose in God's Word and the Gospel of Jesus, but that your preteen finds it as well.

Following His Lead,

Stephen Yates

Associate Pastor of Student and Young Adults



THEOLOGY 101

Faith – A posture of complete trust and belief. Faith is what God requires of us to truly obey him. Since we cannot directly see or hear God, we must have faith in Him and that the Bible is truth. Faith is proven through our actions and how we live our life.

Think about sitting in a chair. I can say I have faith that the chair will hold me. But I cannot truly prove my faith until I sit on it. The same is true in how we live our life according to the truths in God's Word. 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9

Memory Verse: Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1