

The South Florida Avenue **MESSENGER**

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
The Messenger is published weekly by the South Florida Ave. Church of Christ meeting at 1807 South Florida Ave - Lakeland, FL 33803 Vol. 70 No. 38 10-10-17

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
since 1969

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

5 Reasons Young People Are Leaving the Church

By Hiram Kemp

Everyone is asking the same question, "How do we keep our young people?" We are reading books about keeping young people faithful and why they leave. The statistics from Barna are frequently cited as we research why the exodus is taking place. There are seminars held and lengthy social media discussions, but still, we are left puzzled as to why young people are leaving their faith behind as they enter adulthood. Though I do not have all the answers, let me suggest a few reasons young people are leaving the church.

Free Will

The Bible teaches that individuals have a choice as to whether they will serve God (Josh. 24:15). When we discuss teens and college students leaving the church we often assume it is because the church did something wrong, but many times this is not the case at all. The world and its pleasures are enticing and sometimes young people are drawn to these things and choose to reject the way of faith (1 Jn. 2:15-17). In the days of Elisha, there were young people that mocked the man of God for fun (2 Kgs. 2:24). Times haven't changed.

It should be our desire that none of our young people fall away, but if we believe the Bible we should also realize that this is a potential reality. The way to heaven is still narrow, Satan still blinds the eyes of people, and some still want to go back to their old way of living (Heb. 6:4-6). One of the reasons young people sometimes leave the church is because they want to, and as sad as that is, it is still true. Sometimes, it does not matter what parents do or how much effort the church puts forward.

Failed by Parents

Young people who are raised by Christian parents often leave the church to the surprise of many. After all, "If your parents always brought you to worship services and took you to Bible camp, you will remain faithful in the years to come." By now we should all be willing to admit that simply bringing children to worship and introducing them to religious activities is not enough to keep them faithful in the long haul. Parents that do not talk about God, study the Bible with their children, and teach them Biblical principles of morality are setting their children up for failure in their later years (Deut. 6:4-9).

We can hire a slew of youth ministers and have all the youth activities we want, but if faith is not real to a young person's parents, it won't be real to him or her. Instead of asking, "Where is this young generation headed?," we would be better off asking, "Where did they come from?" Most of our youth are headed in the exact direction their parents pointed them towards (Prov. 22:6). If we emphasize sports, academic excellence, and recreational activities to the neglect of love for and devotion to God, we should not be surprised when we see them walk away from faith.

Many parents wouldn't send their children to school without a backpack or to basketball practice without the right shoes but will send them to worship without a Bible and never ask them what they learned in Bible class. A parent's lack of emphasis on spiritual matters communicates to a child that such is not important. If we want to keep our young people, we must first be sure we truly have their parents. If not, we will only see them at Easter and Christmas, if at all.

Hypocrisy

Nothing got under the skin of Jesus more than hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1). Young people can sense this quickly as they are doing their best to decipher between things that are genuine and things that are not. Those of us who lead and instruct them would do well to examine ourselves and make sure we are being sincere and truthful. Our integrity is rightfully called into question when we teach that non-sinful things are sinful. When they find out we have deceived them they will question everything we ever taught them.

If they know we really care about them, they will listen to what we have to say even if they disagree with us. We need to show a genuine care and concern for them as human beings, answer their questions and objections honestly, and listen to them. They are probably right about some things. If we talk a big game about wanting our youth to grow and flourish and do not follow up with proper actions, they will leave.

Where's the Challenge?

Christianity is a religion of growth. Perhaps we have lost some of our young people because we have not challenged them enough to stay. Teach them to doubt their doubts. When all of our Bible classes are on trendy, topical things, and we never push them to read a book of the Bible or study the text, they will view Christianity as fluffy and empty of the deep substance needed to retain their attention. There is a time for basic lessons, and we need to teach the fundamentals, but we also should go on to mature matters and push them to think through difficult things for themselves (Heb. 6:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:2).

If teens and college age students know that something will be required of them when they come to a Bible class more than just answering yes or no questions and reading a verse, they will prepare ahead of time. Teach them to memorize scripture, dialogue openly about the Bible with friends, and answer the skeptic's criticism to the best of their ability. When we tell our young people that Christianity is easy (and we teach them like it is), when they find out it is difficult, they will be more willing to quit. Challenge them and follow up with encouragement so that they can meet the challenge.

Lack of Involvement

If young people sit on the pew and do nothing, this says to them they are not valuable and no one would miss them if they left. We need to heed the words of Paul and not look down on young people due to their age (1 Tim. 4:12). The more we can involve them in the work of the church and allow them to serve, the better it will be in the long-run. Too many times young people are ignored and the first time we look up for them is when they're heading out the door. We should be proactive in training them to lead the church now and in years to come.

Older women should build relationships with younger women and be an example to them (Titus 2:2-3). Older men should build relationships with the younger men and be someone they can turn to for advice and help. When we do not involve young people or when we segregate them to only the "youth group," they will not feel like a part of the church and will leave as they phase out of the group to which they have been consigned. Use them to read Scripture, lead singing, lead devotionals. Don't limit them to a youth Sunday or youth gathering, but make them feel as much a part of the church as anyone else.

(continued on page 4)

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Nancy Jacobs was admitted to the hospital. Joyce Burbage was admitted to the hospital, due to a fall, but is now home recovering. Please continue to remember Ginny Hamby, Brenda Mask, Evelyn Wyatt, Jim Turner, Margaret Coone, Sharon Washington, Carol Eason and Josephine Bowman in prayer.

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Sharon Edler.

Others: Joy Baker, (Michelle Paulin's cousin), Duane Nelson, Joyce Stearsman, Jack Pinckert, Corey Perry and Paul Meacham, Elizabeth Tubbs-Dean and Carla Chin (Zsazeli Enamorado's teacher).

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, October 17th: FSOP Ladies Class at 7:00 pm

Thursday, October 19th: Beginning of our weekly evening ladies class at 7:00 pm. Please let the Michelle know if you will be attending so the right amount of books will be ordered.

Saturday, October 21st: Semi-Annual Picnic/Sing at Mary Holland Park.

Saturday, October 21st: Trunk or Treat at Tyler & Jessica Anderson's house from 5:30 pm til dark. Please bring finger foods and camp chairs.

October 28th-29th: 90th Homecoming at the North Jackson Ave. C of C in Bartow.

Saturday, November 4th: Ladies Day at Kissimmee church of Christ.

November 12th-15th: Our Fall Gospel Meeting, speaker will be Steve Higginbotham.

Tuesday, November 28th: FSOP Ladies Class at 7:00 pm

Response

Sharon Washington responded Sunday morning and asked for the prayers of the congregation. Also all three of our elders, Kenny French, David Anderson and Bobby Sheumaker came forward Sunday evening and asked for the prayers of the congregation. We thank them for their humility and genuine hearts.

Visitors

Denise Wilson, Dennis & Jean McCarter, Megan Carter and Tiffany Hash, Sam & Megan.



Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. This is a joint effort to evangelize involving Terrance Brownlow-Dindy (6th Street) and Hiram Kemp. Let's point our community to the Bible!

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

October

David Anderson **Table** David Williams
Vince Daughtery **Assist** Robert Cooper

Sunday, October 15, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Jim Turner
Prayer..... Kyle Bingle

10:30 A.M.

Announcements..... Kenny French
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... CJ Grimes
Sermon.....Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tim Croson

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer..... Fred Strickland
Sermon.....Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer John McShane
Greeters.....Bingle Family
Att. Cards..... Antonio/Paul
Open & Close Building..... John McShane

Wednesday, October 18, 2017

Song Leader.....David Williams
Opening Prayer..... John McShane
Closing Prayer Fred Strickland

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

Sunday, October 22, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Ken Walker
Prayer..... C.J. Grimes

10:30 A.M.

Announcements..... Kenny French
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... David Anderson
Sermon.....Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer John McShane

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer Steve Hunley
Sermon.....Hiram Kemp
Closing PrayerDavid Deal
Greeters..... Darlene/ Brenda
Att. Cards..... Ian/Paul
Open & Close Building..... John McShane

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Song Leader.....Matt Willcut
Opening Prayer..... Jimmy Sweeney
Closing PrayerVince Daughtery

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Sept 17..... \$7,596.00
Sept 24..... \$6,078.00
Oct 01.....\$10,676.00
Oct 08..... \$4,847.23
Contribution Average.....\$5,395.19
2017 Weekly Budget..... \$4,716.51

5 Reasons Young People Are Leaving the Church (continued)

Conclusion

Jesus called children to him and wanted them to follow him (Mt. 19:14). We should be doing our best to bring them to Jesus today. Why do young people leave the church? There are many reasons. Sometimes it is not our fault at all, and sometimes it is. May we continue to instill Biblical faith in the generations to come so that fewer will leave the Lord. Ω



From “Sighing” to “Singing”



Recent events could have a great, or at least potentially great discouraging impact on the children of God. Many are still recovering from disastrous hurricanes, all the debate over the NFL and kneeling at the national anthem, worldly icons, Hugh Hefner and Tom Petty, passing away, and the nation’s most deadly mass shooting in Las Vegas, not to mention the most overlooked of recent events by the national media, the Burnette Chapel church of Christ shooting, which hardly received any coverage! Is this country, like the famous country musician sang, “Going downhill like a snowball headed for . . .?” Christians today do not know whether this nation will self-implode or if so, exactly how long it will take, but they can and should take comfort in knowing God. The Lord is greater than any of the mess going on in America! One of the most fearful times in Israel’s young history was when they left Egypt and Pharaoh changed his mind from letting them go to hotly pursuing the people led by Moses (Ex. 14:5-12). *(continued below)*



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

Special Thanks to our sister in Christ, **Kathy Pollard**, and all our **SFA sisters in Christ** who made our Ladies Day 2017 a success! We appreciate all our ladies who worked so diligently behind the scenes and who led in women’s devotionals and logistics!



(continued from above) As the inspired record indicates, God opened up the Red Sea to let His people pass to the other side, and then “the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea . . . the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained” (Ex. 14:27-28). Following that event, Moses and the children of Israel sang a song, the first two verses of which read: “I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father’s God, and I will exalt Him” (Ex. 15:1-2). Indeed, as God overcame the mess Moses and the children of Israel faced, He can cause us to be victorious over the mess in America! Have faith! ❤️ *Brian*



Coming Soon to South Florida Avenue
For the winter quarter, we will have a new Bible school curriculum. The training workshop has been changed to **Nov. 5 from 2:00-5:00 pm**. Let’s be the best Bible class teachers we can be!

The Church & The Home Working Together