

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Official Newsletter of Southwest Christian Church

Youth Ministry Update

BY ALICIA TAYLOR

I've been working in the youth ministry, Unashamed Ministries, here at Southwest for nine years. Youth ministry is a unique area to serve within the church. The students are young and active so as leaders, we get the privilege of building relationships and teaching the Word through a lot of fun events and activities. We spend a week in the summer camping in tents, going to the beach, and conquering (or being conquered by) a ropes course. We spend four days in the winter at a cabin in the mountains. We play Nightcrossing and Dart War. We host dinners and car washes. But these events are not the main reason I and the other youth leaders serve in this ministry. Yes, we get to have tons of fun at the events we plan for the youth group, but our absolute highest priority and greatest concern is making sure these young people know and understand the Gospel. The fun stuff is just a bonus! I think it's important for the congregation to know, even in a nutshell, how other ministries within our church are doing. So, here's an update on the youth group!

Houston, Randy, and Jason unashamedly teach the students biblical truths on a weekly basis. As leaders, our prayer is that what the students are learning in youth group is simply a reinforcement of what they are learning at home. During the spring semester, we study books of the Bible word for word, verse by verse. During the fall semester, we study topical lessons. Our current curriculum is "Controversial Issues." The layout we made is working out super well. Week one, we learned what the Bible says about abortion. Week two, we studied how Christians are to respond to abortion. Week three, all five leaders held a question and answer with the students. The next two topics are 1. What the Bible says about homosexuality and 2. What the Bible says about social justice. We are using the same three-week format for these lessons. The conversations so far have been awesome! It's so important to talk about hard issues. These students are in schools and social circles that don't teach or believe the Christian worldview, quite the contrary as you all know. Every other Monday the girls are led in bible study by Robyn and me and the boys meet with Randy. We are currently studying the book of James and what it means to walk by faith. The five of us leaders pledge to continue to teach the students entrusted to us biblical truth to the glory of our great God!

There have been times we have had more youth leaders in the room than we do students, but we continue to teach. We won't be discouraged by the numbers but encouraged by the students coming to learn what God tells us through His Word. We are so thankful for each student and their families that God allows us to serve. Please pray with us, for these students, and this ministry.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ~ "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

1 Timothy 4:12 ~ "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity."

Articles

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Judges: The Cycle of Sin and Salvation

Calendar

November 2
Men's Breakfast

November 3
Daylight Savings

November 9
Gospel to the Valley
Mall Evangelism

November 15
Last Young Adult's Study
for 2019

November 16
Women's Christmas Craft

November 24
Thanksgiving Service

November 28
Thanksgiving

Every Sunday Night
Prayer Meeting 6pm

Every Wednesday Night
Bible Study 6pm

Every Other Friday Night
Young Adults Study 6:30pm



Judges: The Cycle of Sin and Salvation

BY LUKE KIRKENDALL

Judges is a heart-breaking book describing Israel's spiral into depravity and rebellion against God. Despite the book's graphic description of Israel's sin, it stands as a vivid illustration of God's faithfulness and mercy. After failing to drive out the Canaanites from the Promised Land, Israel quickly abandoned God and His law. They adopted the customs of the land, and fell into the awful sins of the Canaanites. The religious and moral failure of the nation was severe and extreme. It involved the tribes of Israel, the people of Israel, and even the Levites and priests of Israel. Judges 2:11-23 gives a brief overview of the book, showing that Israel was living in a cyclical nature of downward failure before God. There are five stages to this cycle: sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, and security.

SIN: The first phase of the repeated cycle in Judges is a period of sin. Judges 2:11-13 explains that the Israelites adopted the gods of Canaan as their own. The rebellion against God went beyond a moral failure, it was a religious failure. They worshiped the foreign gods in heinous ways that the author of Judges was too offended to describe. Psalm 106:34-39 explains that Israel adopted the customs of the Canaanites, even participating in human sacrifice, something not mentioned in Judges. As Judges continues, Israel's sin becomes grosser and more obscene. By the end of Judges, the Levites were leading the nation in the worship of idols, one of the tribes was almost eliminated, and the nation was on the verge of civil war.

SERVITUDE: In response to Israel's sin, God gave Israel into the hand of her enemies. Instead of being the victors and rulers of the Promised Land, they became the oppressed and dominated. The nations that were not driven out, became a perpetual thorn in their side (Judges 2:3). During this phase of the cycle of sin, there was no hope for Israel. They were soundly defeated in battle and could not fend off the threats of their enemies.

SUPPLICATION: Eventually, Israel would realize that the Baals and Ashtaroths could not save them from their enemies. In a moment of complete weakness and humility, Israel would groan and cry to God for help. Even when God gave Israel over to their enemies, He never completely abandoned Israel. Judges 2:18 says that God was moved to pity them because of their groaning.

SALVATION: God's faithfulness to Israel was demonstrated by the raising up of judges. These were men who were used by God to free Israel from their captors. God had a relationship with these judges that was different from the average Israelite. God communicated directly to the judges, provided signs, and gave specific instructions to them. The victories were typically extraordinary and a demonstration of God's influence upon the situation.

SECURITY: Once freed from the Canaanite oppressor, the judge that the Lord raised up would also serve as a ruler over the nation. For a time, Israel would return to the Lord and there would be peace within the land. Under the leadership of the judge, there would be a period of peace and security within the land. This final stage was short-lived, and would come to an end. When the judge died, the nation would revert back to the customs of the Canaanites, thus starting the cycle over again (Judges 2:19). On some occasions, the judge even would participate in the sin of the nation. With each cycle, Israel's sins became more extreme. The cycle of sin was not just a circle, but a downward spiral of depravity, increasing with each repetition.

The twenty-one chapters of Judges are a continual testing of the Lord's patience. The reader is left wondering why God would participate in the sin cycle? God would have been completely just to leave Israel in the second phase of servitude. Judges reveals the gracious faithfulness of God and the need for Him to establish a king over Israel.

God's faithfulness is present within every page of Judges. God is faithful to the promise that He made to Abraham concerning Abraham's descendants and the land that they would occupy. Genesis 17:8 says, "And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." God would be faithful to his promise, despite the unfaithfulness of Israel. Israel did everything that it could to violate God's covenant, and yet, He showed grace by continuing to hear the cries of Israel, and raise up judges, even when they did not deserve this kindness. The result is that mankind can know that God is true to His Word and the promises that He makes.