

How to Reach the Youth for Jesus

John 5:1-9

Pastoral Announcements:

- Raise your hand if you need a bible, we will be in John 5:1-9.
- Praise report: August 2024 we had 12 leaders, today we have 22 leaders because God has been changing a lot in the youth ministry, but in very good ways.
 - New dynamic: Starting this August, **Middle and high schoolers will split into two separate rooms** for verse-by-verse teaching and small groups but meet together for collective worship.
 - The heart behind this change is because we don't want to drop the momentum that we've been working on building a strong worship culture amongst the youth. If you were there last week for our first summer night, that's exactly what we want to continue to foster.
 - We also want to keep the momentum of our small group discipleships that we've been working on for almost a year now. If we want to see continued growth, we believe it's important for them to split tailored to their maturity level and spiritual growth, but again, stay together for collective worship.
 - We believe this will help every student grow deeper in their faith journey.
 - Because of this new dynamic: we are praying for 8 more leaders who are strong at facilitating small group discussion.
- Praise report: Another praise report I want to highlight is that tomorrow we are taking 17 junior high students and 7 leaders to summer camp. Just 6 weeks ago, we only had 5 students signed up and it took a lot of courage and faith to see God fill every spot. We believe camp is more than a summer event, it's investment into a transformative opportunity where students can experience Jesus wholeheartedly. This is a great moment for young men and women to grow and mature in their discipleship journey so we're really excited for that.

Today we are going to take a short break from the book of Titus, and we are going to talk about how you can reach the youth for Jesus. Before we get started, please join me in prayer.

Hook:

What do you think goes through God's heart when He looks at the youth in our city? (Pause) Do you think He is pleased? Do you think He is proud? Do you think His heart maybe grieves? (Pause) Not only from those who are in rebellion, but for those who are hurt, abused, isolated, outcasted? Is His heart broken? Is He just completely compassionate? Is it all of the above and more?

Well today, I want to talk about a Gospel story that I believe reflects the heart of God for the youth and young adults in our city.

Background Context:

[Read John 5:1-9](#)

What we see in this passage is that Jesus encounters a lame man who has been paralyzed for 38 years. But let me give you some more context.

- Jesus is in Jerusalem and in Jerusalem was a sheep gate, which was a pool but in Aramaic the name was Bethesda.
 - Bethesda actually translates to house of mercy, place of mercy, so these people waited at the pool trying to find mercy because their physical bodies were so painful, but this place was anything but merciful. The pool of Bethesda was really a place of misery, because a bunch of miserable people waited for something that would never really heal what was most important being their sin.
- Now at the pool of Bethesda lay a multitude of invalid people, blind, lame, and paralyzed men and women.
 - That means these people were without help. They were helpless and powerless.
 - An invalid person is a person without strength. A person who is unable to better himself, and a person who is unable to do something for himself.

These invalid people heard of a folklore that gave these helpless people, hope. The folklore was that every so often, there was an angel who would stir the waters of the pool, and the first person to make it to the middle where there was a geyser, a hot spring that periodically erupts sending water into the air, and touch the water would be healed of his/her diseases!

- Now, this was never confirmed in the Gospel accounts that people were actually being healed by touching the geyser first.
- From what these people heard in these times, people were being healed, and that's why they waited so long in hopes that they could start a fresh new life without their disabilities.

So, what we see in this story is that there is a lame man, an impotent man that had been waiting at this pool for 38 years who eventually encounters an OMNIPOTENT man. A powerless man meets an all-powerful man. The helpless man meets the Ultimate Helper. you get me? Now let's look at verse 6.

- It says, “Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” The sick man answered, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Get up, take your bed and walk.” And at once, the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.”

In a moment, this impotent man was healed and his life was forever changed not because Jesus was the one who lowered him down into the pool, not because somebody grabbed a bucket of the water and then dumped it on him, the pool had nothing to do with it – his life was forever changed because in that moment he had the faith to believe that Jesus is Lord! This man is waiting in Bethesda, the house of mercy, and encounters Jesus who is the only one who can give out mercy in the house of mercy and it is God’s mercy that compels Jesus to pour out his love and transforming power in the midst of inability, helplessness, and weakness. (pause)

- I’m going to lay it out simply, but this story actually resonates a lot with some of the spiritual challenges we struggle with when giving the Gospel to youth and young adults. I am comparing primarily Gen Z and some Millennials to what modern day powerless people look like that was mentioned in this chapter.
 - The invalid people in the Bible were searching and seeking believing that a higher power, some sort of god, some form of angel would heal them if they just did this or made it to that.
 - Like I said, Bethesda translates to “house of mercy,” right? Well, I think there are certain areas in Vegas that young people would also call Bethesda, a place of mercy.
 - That might be the strip, that might be by finding sexual gratification on the strip, by gambling and think more money = more mercy, that might be through numbing themselves through drugs, marijuana, and alcohol, fortune tellers, whatever it may be. However, we know that Jesus is the only Mercy Giver in the house of mercy because He has eyes of compassion like He did for this lame man.
 - Gen Z is coined THE SEEKING generation. Young adults have never been more spiritually open.
 - According to US Barna, 77% of GEN Z & Millennials in the US say they believe in God or a higher power and would like to grow spiritually, and 44% of YA are more open to God today than they were before the pandemic (Barna 2023).
 - This does not mean that 77% of young adults are turning to Christianity, some of them are. There are a lot of them are turning to Buddhism, to Hinduism, to Islam and becoming Muslim, to Mormonism, they are

seeking after some sort of spirituality and trying to heal what's broken in them.

- **Share story of Japanese ramen shop**

- The invalid people in the Bible were helpless, without strength, unable to better themselves.
- Gen Z are spiritually helpless, often overlooked like this lame man was, and without strength because they struggle with anxiety and depression. Unfortunately, suicide rates are astronomically high with suicide being the third leading cause of death among those aged 15-29. 1 in 3 YA aged 18-25 experience mental illness and 1 in 10 experience a serious mental illness.
 - Young adults struggle with financial worries, achievement pressure, parental expectations, and the aftermath of the pandemic have still created a massive number of isolation.
- The invalid people were enslaved to their bondage. They were blind, lame, and paralyzed. They let their disfunction mark their identity and that's why they didn't leave. It was easier to believe in this folklore, in this fairy tale than face reality and choose to believe in the One True God.
- Youth are enslaved and comfortable to their bondage too!
 - Bondage/Addictions:
 - Marijuana is big
 - Nicotine/Vape pens
 - Young adults are Medicated up on prescriptions
 - Drugs for Parties/Raves: meth, ecstasy, and cocaine.
 - Lots of these parties lead to sexual intimacy and one night stands because hook up culture is massive in young adults.
 - Alcohol for social acceptance/peer pressure. Also very easily accessible.
 - Sexual immorality is a huge issue overall starting with inappropriate online content.

2 Timothy 4:3 ““For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.”

- I don't know about you, but let me tell you the time has come where this verse is now the current reality of what we are facing. People will obey their itching ears than sound truth. People will go to whatever will give them instant gratification and will accumulate people in their life to tell them exactly what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear.

- It is easier for them to use all of this as their coping mechanism than for them to face the reality of becoming a follower of Jesus. Most people don't want to believe in Jesus because they knew if they really accepted him, it means they would be confronted by their own life and it would be forced to change, but they're not ready to change their habits because sin feels good!

Guys this is the state of the youth and young adults. They are powerless people, helpless, without strength, unable to better themselves in their own will, **but here's some groundbreaking, life-changing news, God made a way for them to be freed from all of that through faith in Jesus Christ alone.**

Main Points:

1) What is God's heart for the youth and young adults here in our city? God wants to see a movement of youth and young adults who experience a spiritual awakening through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It really is that simple.

- a. That means, God desires to bring restoration in their brokenness, He desires to pull them out of their isolation, break them out of the chains that keep them in bondage, heal them from their disabilities both physically and spiritually, give them real hope, and officially reconcile them back to the love of the Father.
- b. This isn't some grand new revelation specific to this church - this is biblically God's heart for all people! That none should perish, that all would repent, and that we would all recognize that there is nothing that this world could give us to satisfy what we're really searching for. That we would stop playing games trying to figure things out on our own and come to a place where we recognize the answer is Jesus. The answer is come to Jesus. Abide in Jesus. Repent in Jesus. The answer is Follow Jesus. Surrender to Jesus. Choose Jesus and not any other worldly method.
 - i. **What I'm getting at is you don't have to wait 38 years like this lame man to finally be healed,** to finally receive what you've been desperately seeking for your entire life!! You don't have to wait 38 years for Jesus to encounter you and transform you when **You can accept Jesus right now.**

For us to see a movement, a revival of young people experiencing a spiritual awakening, this is what needs to happen - this generation needs the older generation to invest and pour themselves into them. **This is absolutely the reality: This generation needs the older generation, and the older generation needs the younger generation.**

This generation needs the older generation to give them wisdom, guidance, care, correction, and love. The younger need older, mature men and women to guide them in developing solid theology and in growing their character! When the younger have the older in their corner, it brings proper perspective and balance in their life.

But the older generation NEED the younger generation as well. Young people bring enthusiasm, boldness, and zeal that reignite vision and stir the faith up in the more experienced Believers.

(Loud) I mean just look at last week during our summer nights! The youth and young adults came to the front worshipping on their knees, jumping for joy and then I saw some of the older women come to the front and started worshipping with their whole being!! They were enthusiastically giving God the praise He is absolutely worthy of so the youth remind you of your first love, Jesus. The younger generation also give the older generation some sense of purpose because your legacy isn't complete until you've passed on the torch.

- Moses passed the torch to Joshua, the prophet Elijah passed the torch to Elisha, the apostle Paul passed the torch to Timothy, and Jesus passed the torch to his teenage disciples.
 - o It is so cool seeing my toddler who is almost 2 years old have LITERALLY my exact same personality. He is a button pusher and loves to tease his mom, just like me, I tease my mom and my wife – in love, I love to get my back scratched and will complain if I don't get it, he likes to complain too, I love basketball, and all he wants to do is shoot his little basketball on his kid's size basketball net. Man, he gives me so much to look forward to, so much purpose to teach him everything I know!
- More than you just passing the torch to complete your legacy, you are really fulfilling what God has commanded you to do: which is to go make disciples and teach them to observe everything Jesus has commanded!
 - o This is something we take very serious as a part of our discipleship ministry philosophy – we desire to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples! That is why it is important to have the older invest into the younger.

According to an Axios article, they report the reality that young men are leading a religious resurgence. Like I said, this generation is hungry for the truth. They are seeking and seeking and trying all these methods but you know what I've observed? When young adults are disengaged, they really don't care what you have to say. They're open, they won't disrespect what you believe, but they don't care. But once they truly decide to believe in something, they don't just commit halfway. They go all in. They become passionate, focused, and unwavering—willing to give up everything, even their very lives, for what they believe is true. So, either they don't care about Jesus or they're ready to become Martyrs for Jesus. I literally asked several young adults

if they thought my observation was based or off-based and they agreed that apart from some special cases, this is an accurate generalization!

- It seems like the research supports that. According to Burge Analysis, this article says that Gen Z, particularly men, are more likely to attend weekly religious service than Millennials and young Gen X'ers, Gen Z men join the church more while Gen Z women leave it, and what's the reason for that? A big factor is the pandemic where people are seeking community, connection, and truth after them being isolated for years that impacted Gen Z harder than most.
- They also say Gen Z are shaping the future and are drivers of the next Christian Revival. It's funny, because Christianity is decreasing, more and more people are turning away from the faith, churches are closing faster than newer churches are being planted, the number of Gen Z who never go to church grew from 28% to 37% in just three years, so while revival is happening across college campuses like the recent revival at the College Asbury in Kentucky, many Gen Z are still walking away. What does this data mean? It means Gen Z is in revival and retreat at the same time.

If you are a young adult in this room, I bet you would agree that you have seen teens and other college students surrendering their lives to Christ and joining church communities which is amazing and that needs to continue, **but at the same time**, many other Gen Z's are still disengaging from the church.

The question is, what are we going to do about it? For us to continue to see a spiritual awakening birthed in the youth and young adults in our city, this is what God is asking of us. He wants to know, *"Are you ready to join in what God is already doing?"* In other words, are you ready to say yes? Are you ready to drop your will and obey God's will completely? Are you ready to experience the fullness of God's blessing of what He intended you to experience in your life?

- **Illustration:** *(Goal – to show how hungry the youth are for Jesus)* Let me share with you guys what God is doing in the young adult ministry and how this has been affecting their quality of life.
- There are a group of young adults who just can't get enough. These young adults will stay up worshipping until the sun comes up, they will stay late praying for whoever needs it, they are constantly reading their Bibles, and they are constantly doing life together. Not only are they all about worship nights and are emphatic when worshipping, but they'll plan game nights, they'll go hangout at a park and play pickleball, they're about to go cliff-jumping, and I love that they're not exclusive! They are so open to inviting anybody at all who wants to be apart and join in on the fun, but

the best part is they are all actively engaged in serving the Lord. Serving the church, serving people.

- They make it to training meetings, they are teachable and serious about growth, and they are just straight up contagious. Well, what we tend to forget is that this wasn't always the case.
 - o Many of these young adults struggled with identity issues, sexuality, drug use, getting drunk, marijuana, going to raves, they were full of anger in their heart, they said they love Jesus yet acted another way once they got home, they were insecure, they were depressed and anxious, they were hurting and skeptical, but when Jesus finally gripped their heart, they experienced and are continuing to experience true transformation. Of course, they still struggle with certain areas but that's because we're all being sanctified daily. We are all a work in progress but praise be to Jesus God isn't finished with us but the promise is He will finish the good work in what He started in us.
 - o My point is that this generation is SO HUNGRY for Jesus. They are so desperate. They are still seeking constantly for His presence and every time they ask of Him they receive Him more and more. My point is - is that Quezia I didn't create these young adults. We didn't form every single one of them, we didn't create this culture, we gave them a space and the opportunity, but it is GOD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO DID ALL OF THIS AND HE IS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING SOMETHING EXTREMELY POWERFUL. What God is doing is bringing a revival, a spiritual awakening in the youth of this generation all because they were ready to say YES to the Lord and follow Him wholeheartedly.

I think of this verse when God asks us if we're ready to say Yes to Him. [John 4:35-38 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.'](#)

- I don't think we even realize, including myself, how many people, how many churches, how many pastors, how many Believers of God have been praying **for exactly this: a revival. They are praying for another movement where they can experience the Glory of God and all His majesty to the fullness that their heart desires to experience His beauty.** This verse is telling us to LIFT UP OUR EYES, LOOK AND SEE THAT THE FIELDS ARE WHITE FOR HARVEST, MEANING PEOPLE ARE READY, PEOPLE ARE READY TO SAY YES TO THE GOSPEL AND SAY YES TO REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN JESUS, because THE ONE WHO

REAPS IS RECEIVING WAGES AND GATHERING FRUIT FOR ETERNAL LIFE SO THAT SOWER AND REAPER MAY REJOICE TOGETHER.

- PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SOWING FOR YEARS AND YEARS AND YEARS, DEEP IN PRAYER, WITH BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS CRYING OUT TO GOD, PLEADING WITH THE LORD ALMIGHTY, "PLEASE LORD SAVE THIS GENERATION. GOD PLEASE HELP THIS ANXIOUS, DEPRESSED, AND SEEKING GENERATION TO FIND YOU." AND HERE IS OUR BEAUTIFUL PROMISE.

JESUS SAYS **I SENT YOU TO REAP THAT FOR WHICH YOU DID NOT LABOR. OTHERS HAVE LABORED AND YOU HAVE ENTERED INTO THEIR LABOR.**

- LIKE COME ON... SERIOUSLY? ARE YOU THAT GOOD LORD? ARE YOU REALLY THAT GOOD AND GRACIOUS? THE REASON I AM EXPERIENCING A MINI REVIVAL IN THE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IS BECAUSE OTHERS HAVE ALREADY LABORED AND DONE A LOT OF THE HARD WORK, BUT I JUST GET TO CASUALLY WALK RIGHT INTO THEIR LABOR? SERIOUSLY? THANK YOU JESUS, THANK YOU THAT WHEN I SAID YES TO YOU, I AM NOW BLESSED TO EXPERIENCE YOU MOVING IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE.
- (softer) Here's the best part, you can do that too! You can enter into the labor which others have already labored for so many years and it's not too late! It's not too late to say yes to Jesus to say yes to the invitation of experiencing Jesus for yourself by serving others.
 - Guys listen: God did the work, God is doing the work, and He simply invites us to be a part of it. That's what I love about the Gospel. It is an invitation for all. Nobody is forcing us! The only one holding us back is ourselves but praise be to Jesus His grace abounds and gives us opportunity after opportunity to respond to His goodness, grace, and mercy in the House of Mercy.

Do you guys remember the question I asked in the very beginning? What do you think goes through God's heart when He looks at the youth in our city? I kind of manipulated your answer by saying His heart grieves, is broken, and is full of compassion, and while that may be true, I firmly believe even more His heart is full of hope. His heart is full of confidence. His heart is full of joy that there will so many more people who will finally say yes to His calling because He sees the white fields of harvest. He sees young people who are full of strong, spiritual giftings that are just ready to BURST and change families and the world. He sees those who are ready to obey their King, so let me ask you this one more time: are you ready to join the work in what God is already doing today.

If this is you, I'm going to give you four practical steps on how you can join how God is moving at Awaken Church.

Practical Application/Next-Steps:

- 1) God is changing the dynamic of youth ministry, and what we need is 8 more youth leaders who are ready and Lord willing even more than 8 if that's what He wills. Nonetheless, 8 people, whether you're single, married, or have children, who are ready to pour themselves and invest into this generation. Who are ready to take discipleship seriously and reach out to these students, attend their sports games, grow their foundation in the Bible, and intercede deeply on their behalf. If that's you please talk to us at the next steps area and let's get the ball rolling in developing the next world changers!
- 2) If you're a youth or young adult, then be apart of our ministry. We want you to call this place home so that we as a church can be a part of your spiritual walk with the Lord. For my middle and high schoolers, we have youth service at 6:30pm on Thursdays and we would love you to join us. For the young adults, our next gathering is June 20th that will have powerful worship, a Gospel message, and amazing fellowship. I know it can be intimidating to join a group and you don't know anybody, but it takes boldness to commit and watch God bring people in your life to love on you. You just have to be courageous to join in on what God is doing.
- 3) Continue to live missionally in all that you do. Be present with your children's sports teams, schools, clubs and their families. Be intentional and strategic on inviting certain families over for dinner, and make it your aim to purposefully invest in the young people in this generation.
- 4) Pray. Pray for the youth in our city. Pray for the youth and the families who call Awaken their home. Pray that God would change your heart posture towards this generation. Maybe you've felt like they're doomed and the kids after them are doomed growing up in the digital age, but we know they're not. They are in the hands of our loving Father. Pray for God to soften the hearts of young men and women, for God to open divine opportunities to preach the Gospel verbally and through our own lives, and continue to pray for God to bring a revival, a spiritual awakening in this city and in the world.