**Three Chairs**

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday June 12th, 2022

Text: II Timothy 2:1-2

# Intro

1. If you look around the congregations of the Lord’s body just in our local area, you will notice an age range that is missing in the majority of the churches: the 20’s to 30’s.
   1. Many of our congregations have teens and some have young couples in late 20’s to 30’s, but there’s not many of them.
   2. The alarm bells have been going off among the brotherhood and even in denominations where this has been felt for over a decade now.
   3. What is happening? Why are young Christians leaving the church?
2. Lifeway Research conducted a study (January 2019) that showed 66% of teens left Christianity, and a great percentage of them did so at 18 when they went off to college.
   1. This means nearly 7 in 10 teenagers who used to be active Christians left.
3. Studies show various reasons why young Christians are leaving the church:
   1. College and work
   2. Political/Social Activism (they either disagree with the church’s stance against what they perceive as political/social ideology, or they want the church to take a heavier stand on their side)
   3. They perceive the church to be forsaking or resisting science
   4. They marry non-Christians and slowly or swiftly drift away, most choosing not to raise their children with a Christian faith and perspective
   5. They feel underutilized, meaning they don’t feel useful or have any responsibility in the work of the church
   6. They feel marginalized by older Christians who they perceive view them as underfoot or in the way of the work of the church
   7. They feel as if they don’t have or lost connections to others their own age
   8. Some felt as if the church couldn’t answer their “Why?” questions
   9. They feel the church is too judgmental and/or hypocritical
   10. They feel the church is too exclusive (they buy into the all-inclusive mindset of the world, meaning they see no need to call out the sin of the LGBT crowd and others)
   11. They no longer believe in the mission or purpose of the church
   12. They were only going to church to please someone else
4. So-called “Christian” author David Kinnaman of *“You Lost Me”* said, “It’s a disciple-making problem. The church is not adequately preparing the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture.” *(02/01/2012, Christian Chronicle)*
5. While what he says rings true (by looking about our area), it isn’t just the fault of the church but the home as well! *Children need to be taught by word and example in the home!*
   1. If all the Bible study a child gets is on Sundays and maybe Wednesdays, they aren’t being grounded in the truth.
6. This can be seen in the Three Chairs Theory of Apostasy: Three chairs can represent this drift…
   1. The first generation is fired up, enthusiastic, and dedicated to God.
   2. The second generation goes to services. They go through the motions, but the fire and zeal of the first generation are missing.
   3. The third generation doesn’t care. They give themselves completely over to sin.
7. The Scriptures bear out these three chairs!
8. **Three Chairs**
9. Abraham, Isaac, Esau
   * 1. Abraham
        1. Known as the father of faith, “father of us all” (Romans 4:9-16)
        2. He “was called the friend of God” (James 2:23).
        3. As he traveled, he frequently built altars to God: It is recorded that he built 4 altars (Genesis 12:7-8 (13:4); 13:18; 22:9)
        4. It is recorded that Abraham built 1 well (Genesis 21:25, 30) but when he died it says the Philistines filled in *all* his wells (Genesis 26:15, 18) so we know he had dug others, but only one specific one is mentioned.
        5. His focus was spiritual!
   1. His son, Isaac
      1. Worshiped God, but his faith was not as strong as Abraham’s (Genesis 26:1-5, 12-14, 22, 24-25, 26-30).
      2. Instead of altars, he is noted for the wells that he built: It is recorded that he built 5 wells (Genesis 26:19-20, 21, 22, 25, 32).
      3. It is recorded that he built one altar and…he puts a well next to it! (Genesis 26:25)
      4. To illustrate this drift towards worldly considerations, Isaac favored one of his sons because of the food he brought to the table (Genesis 25:28)
      5. His focus was physical!
   2. Isaac’s son Esau
      1. That son, Esau, was very worldly
      2. He married local women who did not worship God (Genesis 26:34-35; 36:2).
      3. He despised his inheritance (birthright) (Genesis 25:29-34).
      4. He is recorded as an immoral and godless person in Hebrews 12:15-17 and God said, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED” (Romans 9:13)
      5. His focus was worldly!
10. David, Solomon, Rehoboam
    1. David
       1. David is described as a man after God’s own heart (I Samuel 13:14; Acts 7:46)
       2. He wasn’t always a good king and husband: he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah (II Samuel 11-12; Psalm 51)
       3. He was not always a successful father…
          1. His son Ammon raped his half-sister, Tamar (II Samuel 13:7-20).
          2. Another son, Absalom, attempted to overthrow David and laid in public with some of his father’s concubines (II Samuel 15-18).
          3. Another son, Adonijah also attempted to overthrow David while he was on his deathbed (I Kings 1:5-6)
       4. He had a heart of repentance (Psalm 51)
       5. The king all other kings were measured by (I Kings 14:7-8; 15:3-5; 15:11; II Kings 18:3)
       6. His heart and focus were always on God & the spiritual (I Chronicles 29)
    2. David’s son Solomon
       1. David’s son Solomon was chosen by God to be king (I Chronicles 29:1)
       2. He loved God & often prayed to Him and even asked for wisdom (I Kings 3; 8)
       3. He spent 7 years building the temple (I Kings 6:37-38)
       4. But he spent 13 years building his own palace (I Kings 7:1) – The worldly shift was happening…
       5. He followed his many foreign wives in idolatry (I Kings 11:1-6).
       6. The wisest king to ever live was focused on the physical!
    3. Solomon’s son, Rehoboam
       1. Under his rule the kingdom was split! (I Kings 12)
       2. Under his rule, Judah went after idols (I Kings 14:22-24)
       3. His focus was worldly!
11. Joshua, Israel’s Elders, Israel
    1. Joshua and his house served the Lord (Joshua 24:15)
    2. The people served God during all of Joshua’s life and during the lives of the elders who served Joshua (Joshua 24:31)
    3. After that second generation died out, a generation arose that did not know God! (Judges 2:10-13)
12. First Chair people put their emphasis on serving God (Hebrews 11:8-16: This world is temporary: like Abraham, people of faith seek a better country; Matthew 6:33: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!)
13. Second Chair people begin a blurring of godliness and worldliness (Isaac with his wells and his food – Genesis 26:25; 25:28; Solomon and his many wives – I Kings 11:1-6)
    1. ***Saints can’t be the bride of Christ and be the girlfriend of Satan!***
14. Once the drifting begins, it is hard to stop!
15. **How Can We Do Better?**
16. It is hard enough for dedicated people to raise faithful children
17. When one is only loosely committed, their children will push faster and farther away
18. The drift starts with a desire for this world (Galatians 4:9)
19. Sin causes love to grow cold (Matthew 24:12; Revelation 2:4-5)
20. Primarily, the drift is caused by incomplete teaching!
    * + 1. Teaching is to be done in the home by both parents (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20)
        2. Teaching is a father’s responsibility (Ephesians 6:4)
        3. God warned the Israelites to diligently teach, lest they forget (Deuteronomy 6:7)
        4. Too often, we hope that our example will be enough…
           1. What example did Isaac give his sons?
           2. What example did Solomon give his children?
21. Train the next generation in the home! *(Proverbs 1:8; 6:20)*
    1. II Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
22. Train the next generation in the church!
    1. II Timothy 2:1-2: Paul wanted Timothy to teach faithful men who will teach others. The gospel must be taught! *(II Timothy 2:24-26: The goal is to save people from Satan!)*
23. Direct your efforts to teaching the word of God to your families in word and by example!

**Conclusion**

1. The Three Chairs theory of apostasy isn’t all bad. There are good examples in both O.T. & N.T.
   1. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
      1. Jacob was favored by God (Romans 9:13) and had a faithful relationship with Him (Genesis 28:10-22) and is in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11:21.
      2. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (Genesis 32:22-32: Because he fought with God and with men and prevailed)
      3. Jacob’s teaching stuck with Joseph, his son (Genesis 50:15-21)
      4. Jacob’s focus was spiritual!
   2. Lois, Eunice, Timothy
      1. Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish-Christian mother named Eunice, and the grandson of Lois (Acts 16:1; II Timothy 1:5).
      2. Lois had a “sincere faith” (II Timothy 1:5)
      3. So did her daughter Eunice (II Timothy 1:5) and they trained Timothy from a child in God’s word (II Timothy 3:15)
      4. Timothy was converted to Christianity by Paul and was a faithful preacher of the gospel (II Timothy 4:1-2), and Paul referred to him as “my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (I Corinthians 4:17) & as his “true child in the faith” (I Timothy 1:2).
2. The Third Chair can be faithful!
3. How do we stop the drift?
4. If you are a Third Chair person who has drifted away from God, you need to get right with God. You are lost without Him!
   1. II Thessalonians 1:6-9: Those who do not know God and those who have not obeyed the gospel will be punished for eternity!
5. If you are a Second Chair person, look at what God told the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14-19
   1. They were lukewarm, like Second Chair people (compromising with the world)
   2. They are bad tasting water – they made Jesus sick and He would vomit them out!
   3. They keep those who are cold from seeing what being hot is like
   4. They keep throwing cold water on the hot!
   5. The solution:
      1. Vs. 18 - Turn to God
      2. Vs. 19 - Be zealous
      3. Vs. 19 – Repent
      4. Vs. 20 - Rededicate your life to serve God. *Get to work!*
6. If you are a First Chair person:
   1. Hang onto your faith. Now is not the time to give up (Hebrews 10:35-36; Revelation 2:25)
   2. Teach your children. If possible, teach them more than you currently know! (II Timothy 2:2, 24-26)
7. We can do better!
8. We can stop the drift with love, zeal, training in righteousness, a focus on spiritual priorities, and a heart that turns towards God!
9. If not a Christian, you need to be! Repent & be baptized today!
10. If a Christian who has erred, repent and be renewed!

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