

Study Guide – Screenagers 2 – “The Comparison Trap”, *from 11-12-2017*

Warming Up

When Cain saw that Abel’s offering was accepted by God, and his was not, this comparison led to the world’s first murder. Cain did not ask why his offering was not accepted. He just knew that his brother looked better before God. God rhetorically asked, “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” (Genesis 4:7) Why do you think we are often more concerned with how we compare to others than with judging and correcting our own poor decisions?

Takeaway # 1 – Looking at the Screen

As Pastor Baugh pointed out, children used to have the opportunity to compare themselves to only a few others in their classrooms. Now, people can compare themselves to 7.5 billion people on social media. Since no one can stand up to that much competition, we tend to crop out black eyes and other parts of photos that show the real side of the messiness of life. Why is this deception so important to us?

Now much time should a parent spend teaching their children the values that they embrace? 11-22 year olds average 7 hours a day looking at a screen. Are parents always knowledgeable of what values are being taught to their children on the screen? What can parents do to protect their children from straying away from the beliefs and behaviors that they want for them? Be specific.

Takeaway # 2 – Effect – Erasing of Contentment

Adam and Eve originally lived in an environment that had not yet known sin nor death. Yet, Lucifer’s temptation for Eve to compare herself to God begins when he says, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.” (Of course, Lucifer had compared himself to God in heaven, resulting in his expulsion from heaven.) Adam and Eve’s comparison to God resulted in sin and death for humanity. We often wish we could have been in the Garden of Eden, but maybe we are. If you’ve ever been to a part of the world that suffers nearly continuously, you soon realize what a paradise we have in this country, even though things are not perfect. Why do you think that so many people spend so much time thinking about what they don’t have instead of what they do have? It was like this for Lucifer in heaven, and Adam and Eve in the sinless, deathless Garden. Discuss what you think is the cause of this discontentment. Are we subconsciously saying, “God is not enough for me”?

Comparison to so many others can cause anxiety. Pastor Jason pointed out that in this social media age, the suicide rate among teenage girls is the highest that is has been in forty years. One effect of taking a break from social media can be a more sober mindset. Perhaps this is God’s will... “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses

all understanding, **will guard your hearts and minds** through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7) Which is better, the sober action of guarding our own minds and hearts in prayer and thanksgiving, or continuing the addiction of participating in social media for so many hours? Discuss how to specifically make the better choices.

Takeaway # 3 - It's All Really about God

No father wants to hear his child talk about how a friend's father is "so cool." The implication is that you are not as cool as that kid's father. Yet, as a father, you are doing so much more for your child than the other kid's father is. Couldn't God ask, "What else must I do to be honored by you?" None of us worship and honor God as much as He deserves, but we get hurt when our children don't honor our imperfect selves as much as we want them to. How can we change our focus from looking horizontally (towards created people) to vertically, (towards our eternal Father)?

1 Samuel 16:7 reads, "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." How many images on social media are focusing on outward appearance compared to someone's heart? (This answer varies by what a person is trying to get out of the screen time.) But what is driving our "heart" when we try so hard to do something that will make people like us or be envious of us? Is social media a stark revealer of the heart?

Pastor Baugh pointed out that when God said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), that Jesus had not yet done one miracle, nor special ministry. When we compare ourselves to others, we immediately think about how we can perform to be more accepted or highly esteemed. Yet, God loved us before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:3-5) Why is it so difficult for us to judge our value by the love that already comes from the only One who really matters, and be content with that? Why do we resist the thought that we can't make God love us any more than He already does?

Conclusion

The flesh places great importance on what others think of us, yet computer friends have no grand plans for our lives compared to God. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." How much time do we spend living out the "works" that God has already prepared for us individually, compared to seeking approval from the world? List some specific events that could be considered the works that God has prepared for you, then choose the eternal use of most of your time.