

The Lakeview Lamp

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” -Psalm
119:105*

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“Walking the Straight and Narrow”

Troy Nicholson

“Sex, alcohol, drugs. For teenagers, these have long been considered rites of passage, the conventional ways to rebel. Maybe not anymore. Now, being ‘good’ is in. That seems to be the conclusion from the host of studies that have trickled out during the past year. Last month, a federal study reported that smoking and drug use among teens continued to decline in 2004, especially among younger teens. Another government study reported that U.S. teens are waiting longer to have sexual intercourse” (“Walking the straight and narrow: Less sex, drink, drugs among American youth,” *Tennessean*, 1-3-05). Finally some good news about the nation's teens! So what does this news mean, and how has the situation occurred?

This article demonstrates the fact that young people can make right choices. They are not all destined to “sow their wild oats.” *“Josiah was eight years old when he became king...and he did what was right in the*

sight of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 34:1-2). When he was eighteen (:8), an age at which many young people are trying to “find” themselves, he was finding the Lord. Instead of rebelling against God, he humbled himself before God (:27). Teenagers today can choose to do the same.

One 17-year-old senior said that “she has been influenced to steer clear of drugs by the funny and smart anti-drug public health ads on MTV and in teen magazines.” While the emphasis here is on the positive influence that media can have on us, it confirms the fact that it does influence us – whether we are senior teens or senior citizens. We all need to demonstrate wisdom in our entertainment choices. If we make the wrong choices, we can be led away from the straight and narrow, for “*evil company corrupts good habits*” (1 Cor 15:33).

The article also states that “today’s parents...may be better informed than the previous generation and able to address problems quickly, directly, and calmly.” God has always emphasized the role that parents can and should have in the lives of their children. He commands us as fathers to “*bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). As parents we must take the needed steps to say as Joshua did, “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24:15).

Walking the straight and narrow path is not the easiest way (Matthew 7:13-14), but it is a possible way for each of us at every age to choose. It is also “*the way which leads to life.*”

“Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.” – Psalm 73:27

Why Don't We See?

Gary Henry

“You say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ -- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked . . .” (Revelation 3:17).

Why don't we see the depth of our need for God? How could something so important be so difficult to recognize? There are at least three reasons for our failure to see.

Distraction. The here and now has a powerful pull on us. That which is immediate seems more urgent than the remote, and the physical seems more important than the spiritual. “The world is a net; the more we stir in it, the more we are entangled.” It's hard to hear the quiet, eternal beckoning of God when the clatter and clamor of the present rattles so loudly in our ears. Yet the distractions of the present can be resisted, and God expects us to do so. There is a sense in which God is always saying to us, *“This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” (Luke 12:20).*

Delusion. When our faith fails to see beyond the here and now, we lose perspective on reality. Our sense of what's important is turned upside down. Famished with hunger, for example, Esau foolishly traded away his birthright for a bowl of soup. Later when he saw what was really important, it was too late to get his birthright back. Like Esau, we are often deluded into thinking that what we want right now is all we will ever need. Our momentary temporal desires deceive us greatly as to their eternal value.

Denial. At times, there may be an even more serious problem. We may not see our need for God because we choose not to see it. Refusing to admit what we know deep down to be true, we may build our lives on pride and denial, rather than truth. The self-sufficient claim that “we’re doing all right” keeps us from seeing our true emptiness. If we lack either honesty or humility, we may suppress our need for God. “*God is in none of his thoughts. . . . He has said in his heart, ‘I shall not be moved; I shall never be in adversity’*” (Psalm 10:4,6). “*The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’*” (Psalm 14:1). But ignoring our need doesn't make it go away. To deny that our hearts long for Him is to deny the God who made us.

Lakeview church of Christ
132 New Shackle Island Road
P.O. Box 514
Hendersonville TN 37077

Building: 824-1376

www.BibleSaints.com

Bible Call: 824-1310

Troy Nicholson
troyjenn@myfreei.com

"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"
(Psalm 118:24).