

“i-reachout” exclusive...

Jesus didn't stay enslaved to a curriculum. Often he responded to the issues of the moment that people around Him were dealing with. A documentary was aired this week (Tuesday night) which may be on many kids' and parents' minds. I felt compelled to quickly put together some thoughts in case you want to address this issue. I wouldn't miss a great teachable moment from an event that can drive home many Scriptural truths. Here's a disussion/lesson you could either share yourself, or run off for your small group leaders. Choose a few of these points, personalize it, and pass it on...

Lessons From “The Lost Children of Rockdale County”

Introduction

How many of you either saw or heard about the “Frontline” documentary that was televised Tuesday night called “*The Lost Children of Rockdale County?*” Well, here’s the scoop:

In a middle to upper middle class suburb of Atlanta, some girls decided that life was getting boring and they’d spice things up a bit. So in the Spring of 1997 they planned some wild parties where they could drink, do drugs, and fool around with sex. Sounded like a lot of fun, but two years down the road they are full of emotional and physical scars that some wonder if they can ever fully recover from. Get this: so far, health officials have discovered over 200 cases of Syphilis, a serious sexually transmitted disease, that resulted from these parties.

Now some viewers see something like this and say, “Wow, what a tragedy!” and then turn to the next program and forget about it. But as Christians, I believe God wants us to think more deeply about tragedies like this, and understand what the Bible says about them.

Let’s pray that God will give us insight. (Have someone lead in prayer)

What can we learn from “*The Lost Children of Rockdale County?*”

1. Convictions Count.

These girls weren’t forced into a party lifestyle. They apparently had never set any non-negotiables in their lives. A non-negotiable is a value, a conviction that you’ve thought through and decided that you won’t bend on, no matter what happens.

So without any non-negotiables, when they found life boring, drugs and sex sounded like a good option. And listen, if you don’t set some non-negotiables in your life, you could find yourself living with your own major regrets pretty soon.

According to God's Word, what conviction should we have concerning premarital sex. Who will read for us from I Corinthians 6:18?

“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”

Do you want to avoid the heartache that these kids are having to live with? Here's a way. Some people did a study on girls who had avoided premarital sex to see how they stayed pure. Their number one reason was this: ***“having sex would be against their religious or moral values.”*** (Moore, K.A., Driscoll, A.K., & Lindberg, L.D. (1998). *A Statistical Portrait of Adolescent Sex, Contraception, and Childbearing*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.)

Have you made a decision, that even if you've failed in the past, from now on, there will be no sex until marriage? If you haven't, you may find yourself living a life of regrets. Most students who have had sex now say that they wish they had waited. (EDK Associates for *Seventeen* magazine and the Ms. Foundation for Women. (1996). *Teenagers Under Pressure*.)

Discussion: *Let's imagine that a friend of yours comes up and asks you, “I'm considering going to bed with my girlfriend. But I'm still not sure if it's right. What do you think?” Divide into small groups and come up with as many reasons as you can for urging him to abstain. (If they miss any of these when they report back, mention them: One out of three students who have premarital sex will acquire a sexually transmitted disease. Many are incurable. Risk of pregnancy. Emotional regrets.)*

Some Christians in Rockdale County tried to warn their classmates to get out of the party lifestyle before it was too late. Some listened, but others kept partying.

2. What you don't know can hurt you!

The wisest man in the world, King Solomon, put it this way...

“...fools die for lack of understanding” (Proverbs 10:21b)

Some students get pulled into sex and drugs because they believe that “everybody's doing it.” They're afraid that they're missing out. But if you've swallowed the lie that “everybody's doing it,” you'd better think again.

You see, some of these girls were 14- and 15-years-old when they started with sex. Do you know how many 15-year-old girls are into sex? Get this: ***Seventy-eight percent of 15 year old girls (73% of boys) have never had sex with anyone, not even once.*** (From 1998 report from the Centers for Disease Control.) That's almost 8 out of every 10! So be smart. A lot of students who talk so big about their sex lives are all talk. If you've either never had sex, or have stopped having sex, you're in the majority! (I've written a paper on this subject. This angle on teen sex stats is hardly publicized at all.)

3. Family Matters

Listen carefully to how God wants you to act toward your parents, and especially to what's in it for you.

Ephesians 6:1,2 – *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” – which is the first commandment with a promise – “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*

What are some ways you can honor your parents? You could take an interest in their lives, volunteer to help them out. And what is the result, according to the Scripture, of honoring and obeying our parents?

Some students from Rockdale county were interviewed. They may or may not have been involved with the parties. But see if you can identify with them. (Leader: perhaps put these on an overhead.)

Students were asked, “Are you close as a whole family?”

Kevin: Not really. We don't really spend that much time together. Mainly, the only times we're really together are on holidays: Christmas and Thanksgiving. Other than that, we're not really that close.

Jenny: Not as close as most families are. I don't think, anyways-- I mean, in my eyes. I'm always gone. Like I'm never here. And that they could be closer I think. Like we don't say 'I love you' to each other or nothin'. I don't even talk to my dad much or my brothers.

Brandi: ...we don't sit down and eat. Everybody just gets their plate and goes in the living room and eats. ... You just go fix your plate, eat, watch TV, finish watchin' whatever you're watchin'.

Amy: After supper was over we didn't have anything else to do, so we would just all go--like my mom would go upstairs, my dad would go to his workshop or to the TV in the living room. I would go to my room, my sister would go to her room, and we never talked anymore after that. After dinner. And we didn't really communicate like we should have, or like we had before, earlier, when I was littler.

Kevin: I think my dad would like me to spend more time with him. . . When I was a kid I always sat with him in a chair and watch TV all night. And whenever I got home from school I'd go run into my dad's office--Hey and all that. Now it's just like, come home, Hey I'm home. Goin' somewhere. See ya later . I miss it. The feelin' that we used to have. It's kind of like I grew out of it and it's not somethin' that I just wanna go back and do. But, I wish we could we could be a little closer.

DISCUSSION: *What do you think these students were wanting out of their family? Do you think that when families aren't close that this can impact your decisions in life? How?*

Students who stay close to their parents are less likely to get mixed up with dangerous habits. Now I know that for some of you, you're parents are dropping the ball. Some parents work long hours and even when they're home they don't have enough emotional energy left over for you.

But while some students focus in on their parent's shortcomings, the big question for Christian sons and daughters is this: *“When is the last time you told your parents that you*

love them? And do you make it a priority to try to make yourself available to spend time with your parents, even if it's something they like to do more than you like to do?

DISCUSSION: *Teens who are closer to their parents tend to have fewer regrets in their lives. What are some things you could do to get closer to your parents? (Help around the house. Help with dishes. Watch a movie with them. Ask them about how things are going. Make spending time with them a priority. Encouraging them about their good points.)*

4. Sin has Consequences

The Bible puts it this way: ***“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” (Galatians 6:7)***

How do you think these Rockdale students were deceived? (They thought that they could ignore the truth and not suffer for it.) But now they are reaping. Some wonder if this will affect their future marriage. Some are pregnant. And over 200 acquired a dangerous disease: syphilis.

Do you know much about Syphilis? The scary thing about it is that you can have a few rashes that are much like other illnesses, and when they clear up, you think you're home free. But left untreated, it begins to damage organs like your brain, nerves, eyes, and heart. Eventually, you can go blind, lose your ability to have sex, go crazy and even die. (From Centers For Disease Control "Fact Sheet.") In the light of this, look at what Solomon warned us about thousands of years ago. This is what he says happens when you fool around with an adultress:

***But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.
Her feet go down to death,
Her steps lay hold of Sheol.***

***Keep your way far from her,
And do not go near the door of her house,***

***(lest) you groan at your latter end,
When your flesh and your body are consumed. (Proverbs 5:4,5,8,11)***

But the good news is this: If a guy and girl don't have sex until they get married, then they won't get Syphilis. (CDC Fact Sheet) Now does God's way make sense, or what?

God's no killjoy. He's trying to save us from disaster! Speaking of the relationship of a man with his wife, he goes on to tell us the ultimate outlet for our sexual desires:

***Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
Be exhilarated always with her love. (Proverbs 5:19)***

5. Your Spiritual Life Makes a Difference

Have any of you heard of George Gallop, Jr.? (Get a response.) Have you heard of Gallop Poles? This guy is probably the most widely known person who takes polls to find out what is important to people, how people behave, what people believe, etc. Here's something pretty awesome that Gallop found in his studies of teenagers.

“Young people with a sincere and healthy faith dimension to their lives tend to be happier and better adjusted to life than their counterparts, as well as more likely to do well in school, and more apt to keep out of trouble.” (George Gallop, Jr. Found on his web site at <http://www.prrc.com/pubs.html#The>)

Who can put what Gallop said in your own words for us? So if you want to start living a life without so many deep scars and deep regrets, stay in church and stick with God and His team.

6. Forgiveness is Available

Some of you cringe when you hear of the Rockdale kids because you can identify. You've blown it and today feel awful about it. And sometimes you wonder if there's any hope left for you. I've got great news for you.

You're not alone. We've all blown it in some areas of our lives. The Bible puts it this way:

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

And no matter how bad your past, God wants you to know that He loves you.

Do you know John 3:16? The NIV puts it this way:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Before the Apostle Paul became a Christian, he sought out Christians to have them killed. He referred to himself as the “chief of sinners.” But God forgave him and used him incredibly to spread the good news of Jesus. Killed any Christians lately? Even if you have, God wants to forgive you. But you have to take the initiative to ask for his forgiveness, and be willing to turn from your past life.

7. Get a life!

Many students have fallen for the lie that if they follow God, they can't have any fun in life. But can I have some volunteers to look up a few verses for me?

John 10:10 – ***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (Jesus Christ)***

Life “to the full.” In other words, when people say, “Get a life!” Jesus has an answer as to how to get it. But beware, because there’s another force in this world that promises life, but delivers destruction. Here’s what the Bible says about him...

I Peter 5:8 – ***“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”***

After living life longer than you guys have, I’ve come to this conclusion: “The only thing I’ve missed out on by being a Christian is hell.” I like the way a Psalmist put it thousands of years ago:

Psalm 84:11 –

***“For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD gives grace and glory;
No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”***

Conclusion

What happened to the students in Rockdale County didn’t have to happen. And it doesn’t have to happen to you. The choice is before us today as to which road we will take, a road that leads to life, peace, and joy, or one that leads to regrets and destruction.

Some of you are on the road to destruction. Others of you are wavering between the two roads. But today, before God, I want to give you the opportunity to choose life.

Pray