



Highlights, Blessings, and Challenges from **YOUTH BIBLE SCHOOL 2007**

by Paul W. Lamicela

Introduction

“One of the best ever” seemed to be the opinion of many of the students, myself included. There is so much that could be written about the week. However, what I will attempt to do in this article is to highlight some of the subjects that were especially meaningful or applicable to me. This is not a comprehensive overview of YBS 2007, nor is it a substitute for actually hearing the messages. I also wish to mention that the topics discussed here represent areas of need in my life—areas in which I need to grow, not by any means areas that I have mastered.

Common Theme:

Focus on the Person of Jesus

All of the series of messages were very powerful and challenging, and flowed together amazingly well. Often it was hard to remember who said what, because of how all the speakers touched on many of the same points. One good example of this is how each of the three speakers emphasized that our focus must be on the person of Jesus. Brother Dean Taylor made the point that Jesus is the source of our sanctification and holiness. He also made it very clear on Friday that the love relationship with Christ is foundational to our Christian lives. Brother Denny Kenaston spoke of how the focus of our

faith is a Person—Jesus, and His work on the cross. Creeds and doctrines are good, but Jesus is the focus. The titles of Brother John D. Martin’s messages also reflected this theme: “Christ is the Believer’s Life,” “Christ is the Believer’s Mind,” “Christ is the Believer’s Goal,” “Christ is the Believer’s Strength,” and “Christ is the Believer’s Song.” One statement he made on this subject is this: “Any religious practice that you are involved in that is not directly focused on the person of Jesus is nothing more than mutilation.” I believe the emphasis on Christ was one of the reasons why this YBS was so outstanding.

DEAN TAYLOR

Brother Dean based his message titles (except Monday’s) on 1 Peter 2:9: “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*”

Holiness

God’s holiness is a foundational concept to our Christian lives. If we focus on various practical issues, such as modesty or music, we will either become dry and legalistic or throw off all restraints and become licentious. We must focus on God and make our practical decisions based on our consciousness of His supreme holiness. As Brother Dean said, “If we look at these

[practical] doctrines in isolation, it just does not come out right...But if we look at each of these things in the light of a holy God, how it changes everything!"

"Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16). God commands us to be holy, just as He is. We in ourselves

come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

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are absolutely sinful and unholy; all of our holiness is actually the holiness of Jesus imparted to us as we yield ourselves to Him. Part of holiness is separation from the unholy and sinful. We are commanded to separate ourselves from the world in order to be separated to God. This is what God says to us:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore

Under the Old Covenant, the priests were a special, holy, set apart group of the Israelites. There were special rules and restrictions that applied only to them. They had to keep themselves holy in order to fulfill their role as intermediary between God and Israel. Under the New Covenant, we Christians are a "kingdom of priests." We all must keep ourselves holy, set apart, just like the priests in the Old Testament, in order to be the ambassadors of Christ to the world. Brother Dean shared that everything in our lives should be "holiness to the Lord," taken from Zechariah 14:20-21:

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the

altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts."

We should view all the practical areas of our lives, from clothing to cars to being "cool" to music to money, in that light. We should ask ourselves, "Is it holiness to the Lord?" Brother Dean said, "Everything is affected!" This concept is very challenging to me.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Love Relationship with Christ

In Brother Dean's message on Friday, "A Purchased Possession," he shared that having a real, vibrant, loving relationship with Christ should be the basis of what we do in our Christian life. It is not following a list of rules or doctrines. Our love for Jesus, and His love for us, should be the motivation for all that we do to follow and obey Christ. "The love relationship with God is the touchstone of the Christian life," he said. As He wanted with Israel, so He wants with each of us:

And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exodus 19:3-6).

One of my foremost prayers right now is that this relationship will be a reality in my life.

 **DENNY KENASTON**

Soldiers, Not "Casual Christians"

Brother Denny challenged us to be "soldiers," not "casual Christians." I find this to be a very pertinent challenge for my life. It is easy for me to have a "casual" attitude about life and fall into the rut of spiritual laziness. I need to be reminded that I am a soldier, that I need to be proactive and "redeem the time." Brother Denny told us,

Young people, there is no room for casual Christians in the household of God...that is a misnomer! ...Sorry, but I am a soldier. There is no such thing as "casual Christianity." And if you are going to go on to perfection, young people, you have to put away this "casual" mindset. It is not casual; it is not at ease in Zion. It is not sitting here, in the glorious land of Canaan, and enjoying all the good things of God. There is a war to

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fight! There are battles to be won! And it is time for you to prepare, because someday God is going to put a sword into your hand and give you something to do! Let us get busy about personal sanctification, young people.

This concept should affect our whole lives, including the practical issues such as clothing, music, friends, and speech. Brother Denny said this regarding our speech, "Cut out all the jokes, the silliness, and all the idle chatter. You are chasing the presence of God away

from your life. [If you cut these things out,] a reverence for God will settle down on your heart...let the joy of the Lord be your portion."

Soldiers are disciplined. We need to have self-control, self-government: "I tell my body what to do," not, "I do whatever I feel like doing." We need to let Jesus have His way in our lives and "mortify the deeds of the body." Brother Denny said, "We must grasp this; it is a part of our inheritance. We must be willing, desirous, and able by God's grace to bring this body under control. You can have the mastery over every aspect of your lower nature."

"Go in and possess the land!" Brother Denny said. We must not wait on the other side of the Jordan and wander in the desert. We must be willing to fight, tear down idols, destroy cities, knock down giants—and possess all God has for us.

Virtue—"Fierce Loyalty"

Brother Denny defined virtue as "devotion; glad surrender; a brave, warlike spirit; fierce loyalty." Jesus should be the passion of our lives, and we should be fiercely loyal to Him. The Apostle Paul expresses this attitude in Philippians 3:7-8: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

Brother Denny gave the example of David, when he killed Goliath out of a zeal for the Lord and the Lord's people. He also spoke of the woman who poured out the expensive ointment on Jesus as a demonstration of her extreme, reckless, seemingly foolish devotion and love for Him. We need to develop this passionate devotion in our lives. Brother Denny advised, "Employ every effort in exercising faith to develop virtue in your life. Or, crowd every moment with earnest care to develop virtue in your life."

End Reward

Brother Denny's message on Friday was an inspiring, touching reminder of the Reward (capital intended) that lies at the end of the road of the pursuit of godliness. As the pursuit of godliness is actually the pursuit of God, its reward is God Himself. We will forget all the hardships, the trials, the surrender; as the songwriter Esther

Rusthoi wrote, "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus." Brother Denny said,

Heaven is not streets of gold...there will be streets of gold there, but that is not what heaven is. Heaven is Jesus: He whom you have known, whom you have read about, whom you sensed, whom you listened to; now you see Him. Your eyes will see the King. And you have been faithful. And a crown is waiting for you. And [you will hear] those beautiful words coming out of the mouth of the eternal God, powerful words—we cannot even imagine what those words will do to us—... "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" [Matthew 25:21]. ... "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" [2 Peter 1:11]. Young people, it is time to get serious about your Christian life.

We must be faithful.

JOHN D. MARTIN

Joy

Joy was one of the central topics of Brother John D.'s messages, as the title of the series, "Always Rejoicing," suggests. He shared how we Christians should be joyful people. Our joy should be regardless of the circumstances we are in, the people we deal with, and the things (tangible or intangible) we possess or do not possess; and it should defeat anxiety. It is different from happiness, which is directly linked to our circumstances. "Sorrow defines the difference between happiness and joy," quoted Brother John D. If we have joy in the middle of deep sorrow, we know that it is true joy; whereas if we lose our joy when life goes awry, it was happiness we lost, not true joy.

What made this subject especially meaningful was the example of Brother John D. himself. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the experience of losing his teenage son Geoffrey (and the death of his beloved pastor), Brother John D. is a very joyful person. He is a living testimony to the fact that God can make a person joyful even through incredibly difficult circumstances. Paul tells us in Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord!" or, as Brother John D. said, "Celebrate King Jesus!"

Humility of Jesus

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

On Tuesday, Brother John D. spoke of the incredible example of how Jesus stepped down, and down, and down, in obedience to His Father and for our salvation. He went from the throne of heaven and equality with His Father to a cruel death as a criminal, condemned by the very beings He created and forsaken by His Father because of our sins. If Jesus could humble Himself in such an unimaginable way, why is it so hard for me to step down and be humble in such small ways? We must take the example of Jesus and humble ourselves, entrusting our reputations, positions, and lives to God, Who “highly exalted” Jesus and promised to exalt all those who humble themselves. We are called to a life of selfless service.

Lord Jesus—
the “Benevolent Despot”

“Lord Jesus”—what does this phrase really mean? In our time and society, we do not fully appreciate the

meaning of the word *lord*. The word carries the meaning of an absolute authority, one whose every wish and command is not to be questioned but simply obeyed. It means a dictator, a tyrant, a despot—someone who has absolute control over one’s life. When we call Jesus our Lord, we are agreeing to His absolute rule over our lives. As Brother John D. said, “To give someone absolute control of your life is a very risky thing—unless it is Jesus!” Because, “There is only one reason why Jesus wants control of your life; and that is because He is the only Person



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that can arrange it in a way that you will be completely blessed.” Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Unlike the other absolute rulers, “Jesus is a benevolent Despot,” as Brother John D. put it.

God is benevolent! This is a truth which Brother John D. has helped me to realize and believe. God is not

the enemy of my being blessed, happy, and fulfilled; rather, He wants to make me fulfilled and blessed, and give me an abundant life. When I surrender my life completely to Jesus, not only does He receive the most glory possible from my life, but I receive the most blessing possible in my life. *"In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"* (Psalm 16:11). This does not by any means eliminate suffering, pain, persecution, and surrender; it means that God's purposes in these things are His glory and my good. I am only beginning to learn this truth. (Brother John D's

the fire in the log?" He said, "That is a picture to me of what it means to abide in Christ." What a challenge!

MOSE STOLTZFUS

Brother Mose preached the evening messages based on the Parable of the Sower. On Thursday, he delivered a message entitled, "The Path of Rebellion." Brother Mose said that rebellion is "what I believe to be the biggest and worst stone that can be in our soil." Indeed, it is extremely serious. 1 Samuel 15:23 says that *"rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft."* Brother Mose said he believes it is "one of the worst sins of our time," because it is "the root of most other sins." Rebellion in a person's life starts out in small ways, but it grows. If not dealt with, it will continue to grow and will lead the person to hell. We young people especially need to guard against this sin, as it can be difficult at times for us to submit to authority. We need the grace of God and a true willingness to yield to God and the authorities He has placed over us.

Chorus

As always, chorus was a major highlight of YBS for me. The songs chosen were beautiful and inspiring. As always, Brother Earl Fox did an excellent job directing us. Chorus time was a much-anticipated time for me each day.

Conclusion

A few closing remarks: to my fellow youth who attended YBS this year, we must make sure we do not forget what we heard. What good is it to hear so much powerful teaching if we forget it and do not do anything about it? It is my hope that, in part because of YBS 2007, all 569 of us will have grown greatly in our Christian lives by next YBS. To all those who did not attend YBS 2007, make sure you listen to the messages! And to all of us, let us put Jesus first and make Him the passion of our lives! □



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message, "Why Not Today" [index #3886] is a "must listen" on this topic.)

Jesus is not only to be our Despot, He is to be our life—"to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). Brother John D. gave the illustration of a log burning in a fire. He said he likes to watch a log that has been burning in a fireplace for an hour or so and ask himself, "Is the log in the fire or