

# JESUS WAS A YOUTH PASTOR

1.7.24 | Matthew 10

## INTRO

- How many of you know the day you became a Christian? Do you know the day you decided to follow Jesus?
- How many of you don't know the exact day, but you have a ballpark?
- You may be unsure how to answer the question.
- Here's the big one. How many of you decided to follow Jesus before the age of 18?

**According to the Barna Group, 94% of Christians today made their decision to follow Jesus before the age of 18.**

## WHO ARE THE DISCIPLES?

Evidence points to Peter being one of the older disciples, and John being one of, if not the youngest of all 12.

Let's look at how this affects John, to be in close relationship with Jesus from such an early age.

1. **The writing of His Gospel account.** John's Gospel account talks not just about what Jesus did, but who he IS.
2. **John's memory of Jesus's death & resurrection.** Though John's Gospel was the last one written, meaning John was an "old man" when he wrote it, his vivid memory of the week of Jesus's death is incredibly unique in all of ancient writings. Of the 21 chapters in John's Gospel, 9 of them are about the final week of Jesus's life.
3. **How John views himself.** 5 times throughout John's gospel, he calls himself "The one whom Jesus loved". Now we know Jesus loved all of His disciples, but John had this deep confidence that being loved by Jesus was something worth talking about. Not only did John talk about the love of God more than anybody else, but he took it on as his identity. Rather than saying "I, John, reclined at the table with Jesus", he said "the disciple that was loved by Jesus reclined at the table with Jesus".
  - a. Also worth noting, just look at John's posture (**The last supper painting**)

Let's contrast John with Peter. Peter was likely one of the oldest of the 12. He was married, his mother-in-law lived with him and his wife.

Matthew 4:18-22 When Jesus calls Peter, he is out fishing with his brother and likely some of their employees. Peter leaves his small fishing business to follow Jesus. Then, just a few verses later Jesus calls James and John, who were doing the busy work of cleaning the nets for their father who was the fisherman. John left his dad's small fishing business to follow Jesus.

Though they have similar callings, and are likely only a handful of years apart, they have vastly different views of Jesus.

**For 3 years Peter (likely in his 20s) tries to make Jesus fit his own assumptions and expectations of what a Messiah would do. Meanwhile, like a sponge, the younger teenage John marvels at Jesus's every word and is shaped by His every action.**

## How does Jesus teach the disciples?

- Matthew 10
- Difference between teaching & listening.
- He doesn't tell them what it's like to have authority – he gives it to them.

Now that Jesus has his disciples called, and we know who they are (specifically the bookends of Peter and John) let's look at how does Jesus invest in these young souls and minds.

Remember how we said John is written all about the love of God? Well Matthew was a tax collector, meaning he was very organized, probably loved excel and getting things in order – for these things it can be very helpful to look to Matthew to see exactly what Jesus did in order.

To clarify, we're looking specifically at John and what happens when a young mind is in close contact with Jesus. We look to the book of Matthew to see how Jesus interacted with him, and we look at the book of John to see how it shaped him.

So Matthew 1-3 is all genealogy, birth story, and John the Baptist stuff. Then Matthew 4 is where Jesus calls his disciples (we referenced these earlier). Then, the next 3 chapters (5, 6, and 7) is all the Sermon on the mount. Then chapters 8 and 9 are miracle after miracle in very quick succession. Jesus calls the 12, preaches some, then he lets them observe him for a short while – then at the end of Matthew 9 and all of Matthew 10 something happens that we often gloss over. Specifically the time at which he did this. This is the passage that was read earlier.

Remember the context, and remember the subject. Jesus calls John, a boy. John leaves his home, listens to Jesus preach a few times. Sees Jesus perform a handful of miracles. And then this happens:

**Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers**

**are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.**

**-Matthew 9:35-10:1**

Jesus tells them who He is

Jesus lets them watch what He does.

Jesus tells them to go do it for themselves.

Jesus tosses teenagers the keys to Kingdom of God.

If anybody ever had reason to be a keeper of the keys, like in Harry Potter how Hagrid is the only guy that has every key to every door. If anybody in all of history had reason to do that, it would be Jesus. Yet we see Jesus is perhaps the most willing to do the opposite. **Jesus doesn't hoard the keys to the Kingdom of God, rather He is eager to hand them out. The recipients were not the most qualified on paper, but they were the most capable because they had been with Jesus.**

The Fuller Youth Institute calls this concept "Keychain Leadership" where keys aren't hoarded, but given to the hands of young people.

Obviously there are boundaries and safety nets, but we see this is a CRUCIAL part of Jesus's ministry to these young people.

Jesus sends out his 12, including a young teenager named John – **Jesus did not send the 12 out to only talk about the Kingdom of God, rather He gave them authority to "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, and drive out demons" (Mt. 10:8)**

HE TELLS TEENAGERS TO GO RAISE THE DEAD!!!

We know from the Gospels that it was messy. We know that there were times the disciples encountered demons they could not yet drive out. We know they messed up. Even after 3 years, Peter, the oldest disciple still gets it wrong and acts out cutting off a guy's ear and then denying Jesus 3 times.

**Jesus knew his disciples would mess up, but He gave them authority anyway.**

He knew they would be confused, but he let them participate in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth. He invited Peter and John both to the transfiguration and Peter just didn't get it. When he was on the cusp of being murdered he relied on the unreliable Peter and the childish John to pray on His behalf.



THE SON OF GOD ASKED A TEENAGER TO PRAY FOR HIM HOURS BEFORE HE WAS MURDERED.

## How did the disciples turn out?

- Parents that feel tension, struggle, and disappointment with your teens – take heart, even Jesus has been there.
- Every time Jesus gave them authority or a responsibility they messed it up. Literally every single time.

But then – then in Acts we see for the first time Peter & John with the Keys to the Kingdom of God. Jesus ascends to Heaven in Acts 1. In Acts 2 Peter, John, and a few others are in a room when the Spirit of God Fills the room and the hearts of people. Then in Acts 3. Oh man, Acts 3 and 4 are hands down my favorite chapters of the bible. In Acts 3 Peter and John are now the ones healing people and proclaiming the Gospel. Then in Acts 4 they get arrested. The government basically says “We thought we ended this madness when we killed Jesus, but now we have the kids that followed him around gaining thousands of followers every day – we must stop these two”.

Peter & John are on trial and questioned about their actions and they say “It is by the name of Jesus Christ whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead that these people are being healed”

**When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.**

- Acts 4:13

They didn't know what to do with them. Too many people had already seen and believed their message to remove it, all they could do was try to keep it from growing any more.

**Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”**

- Acts 4:18-20

“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”.

JOHN SAYS THIS AS A TEENAGER!!!!

To put it simply, church, we must be a people that allows our young people to see and to hear Jesus first hand. That means we need to hand them the keys.



## Our Response

Last Monday I watched some of the College Football games, and tomorrow night there is the national championship. There is a projection of over 33 million viewers for tomorrow night's game.

33 million people are going to watch college kids play football. Not only that, we are going to give them authority to control our emotions. We are going to give them authority to decide how we feel, how we react, how late we stay up.

These people can't even rent a car yet, but 33 million people are going to give them authority to decide how we feel, act, and speak.

Our society honestly gets this right in a lot of ways. For 15 years we let kids watch us drive cars. Then at age 15 we teach kids about the laws of driving a car, then we hand them the keys and let them get behind the wheel. In fact we REQUIRE they get behind the wheel before we let them do it alone. Do you ever think about how crazy it is that there are 15 years olds on the road with us? I actually think it's really well done.

Meanwhile, Jesus is giving teenagers authority to heal the sick, raise the dead, and drive out demons.

Jesus left the earth and left the keys in the hands unschooled, ordinary teenagers and young adults.

Teens, don't sit you dare sit here and tell me you're not sure if God can use you. Don't you dare tell me you're just in a waiting period until God calls you to something.

Church, PLEASE do not have the desire to have the teens to be put in a classroom every Sunday to listen to more teaching.

Above all, I think our society does one disservice to our teens that trumps all others. We expect our young people to listen to every word, but we hardly ever show them what it looks like to listen.

At school, they're taught how to think  
At home, their taught how to act  
On social media, their taught how to be more accepted  
At sports and clubs, their taught how to perform  
Where are they taught how to actually listen?



My deepest desire is that at church, our teens learn the incredible skill of listening. Now I'm all for preaching and teaching and it is necessary for young people, but it is far from the complete picture. Our young people need to be like John. They need to not just hear about the concepts of being a Christian – they need to see with their own eyes people of desperately in need of a savior. They need to see with their own eyes adults praying over each other in the lobby of our church, they need to see with their own eyes grown men and women weeping at the altar. They need to see with their own eyes adults raising their hands in praise and shouting for joy when somebody gets baptized.

But they need far more than that. They need to know they are part of the church. I think our church does an incredible job of that. In fact, I would argue that we have some teenagers that are more active in the life of the church and advancing the Gospel than our adults.

I don't mean that as a dig at adults, but rather I think it points out something Jesus noticed as well. **Today's teens have more potential to receive the Gospel than any other group, and they also have more potential to proclaim the Gospel than any other group.**

Mount Vernon = 1375  
Fishers High School = 3500  
HSE HS = 3500  
Carmel = 5400  
Noblesville = 3100  
North Central = 3750

Total = **20,625**

**Between the ages of 14 and 18 is where 85% of people make a faith decision that lasts their entire lifetime. As a church we are within 10 miles of more than 20,000 of these souls searching for answers.**

People often ask me what I want to in the future. It most often comes out as “Do you want to be a lead pastor after you're a youth pastor?” That's an absolutely fine question, I welcome it and I understand it. In America we've made being a youth pastor the on-ramp to lead pastors. It's a place where you can try some crazy stuff, have some fun, and hone your skills for the “big stage”.

That's the path plenty of people take and that's fine. But for me – when I look at this slide, I'm convinced that there is no bigger stage. Sure there may be bigger stages to preach on, but there's no bigger stage of life that has more kingdom implications. There's no stage of life where eternity is more on the line than teenagers. As long as these stats are true, I'll spend my life being involved in Student Ministry.



My wife will roll her eyes at how often I say this, but I mean it: If Jesus was a Youth Pastor, I'll be one too.

There are 20,000 souls in our community looking for answers, but the answers we give our young people are just drops in the ocean of information they hear every day – unless we take the time to walk alongside them and actually listen to their questions.

And they have questions:

**"Curiosity about Jesus is widespread in the open generation. Teens in the U.S. are far more intrigued than their global peers, with 77 percent being at least somewhat motivated to keep learning about Jesus throughout their lives. Among teens who are non-Christians or don't know who Jesus is, over half is at least somewhat motivated to keep learning about him."**

**-Barna Group**

I know that's a lot. And I know a lot of you aren't parents of teens. I'm not just talking to parents, and I'm not just talking to TSM mentors. I'm talking to Trinity Church. And I'm not asking you all to be student pastors, serve with TSM. I'm not asking you all to open your home and adopt or foster a young person (though I would argue there is no greater service than these).

No, I'm not asking for that,

**I'm asking you to help model these for our students:**

**1. Listening**

**2. Handing over the keys**

**3. Prayer**

1. Listening: Like I said earlier, there are not many places where today's students get "listening" modeled to them – and if so, it's even more rare that it is an adult listening to a teenager. Try it. Think of the teenagers in your life. Maybe it's your kids, maybe it's your neighbors, maybe it's a niece, nephew, or grandchild. Maybe it's just the teens here at Trinity. Try it. **When you see your friends in the lobby, don't just talk to them – talk to their kids.** Kneel down and talk to their elementary kids, shake the hands of their teenage kids and ask them a question. "What are you doing this summer?" "What's your favorite thing to watch" "What's something coming up you're excited about?" – and then just listen.
2. Hand over the keys. Here at Trinity we do this so well. We have teens on stage leading worship, in the tech booth, on our Trinity Kids team, we have a student preach once a month at TSM. Can I tell you? We have some teenagers that are far better preachers than



I am. Here at Trinity we intentionally don't have separate programming on Sunday Morning for High Schoolers – that's because we want to give them the keys. Do it at home, do it in your neighborhood. Give them responsibility and authority. When you see a student raising funds for mission trips or retreats, give to them. Help them have experiences where they walk in close contact with Jesus. When somebody is sick don't say "I'll be praying for you". Stop right there and ask your teenager to pray with you.

3. Prayer. We're leading into the 21 days of prayer and my goodness. Let them see you pray. Let them hear you pray. Ask them to pray. When you see a school bus pray. For the 21 days of prayer I challenge you to do what you might dread. **Drive in as many school zones as you can.** Pray over the buildings that house THOUSANDS of teens. The people inside those buildings are like soft clay that are moldable but in just a few years they will go through a process that hardens them, many of them for life. Pray that God speaks to them with urgency while they are in this stage. Pray for the teachers, pray for the parents, pray for the school administrators. Pray for their peers. Pray for our own students here at Trinity that they would advance the Gospel to their own spheres of influence. When you see a sports complex pray for the coaches. Pray for our young people. At Trinity we have Prayer Warriors. This is where people in our church passionate about prayer and about young people can be given a family and they are their personal prayer warrior. If you're interested in that, write "Prayer Warrior" on your next steps card.

**When it comes to return on investment in the Kingdom of God – hands down the best things you can do is invest in and pray for the teenagers in your life.**

**How could you increase your investment in our young people?**