

The Young Adult Trifecta

Matthew 6:33

Trifecta. The first time I heard that word was during a college basketball game when famed sport's announcer Dick Vitale used it to describe a three point shot. But the word actually comes from another sport - horse racing. A trifecta is a system of betting in which the one making the wager must pick the top three horses in a race in the exact order of their finish. If chosen correctly, the one with the trifecta comes out a big winner.

Hopefully, you know that I'm not advocating that our graduates take up betting on horse races. But I do want to talk with them for a few moments about a kind of spiritual trifecta. In this case there are three questions that if answered correctly will help them come out as real winners. For these are the questions that young adults in general must answer and answer well if they are to experience the fullness of life that God would have for them.

Here's the first question.

I. How will you handle your freedom?

One of the big challenges that all young adults have to face is what they're going to do with the new found freedom they have. Whether they're going off to the university or entering the work force, they're in a new stage in life where they're less under the watchful eyes of their parents or other authority figures. Now they can do more of what they want to do. And therein is the danger. If they're not careful, they can misuse their freedom to their own detriment.

I remember when I was in college that a guy who lived down the hall from me would stay out until the wee hours of the morning. He'd crash in bed around 3:00 am or so and have to be up within a few hours for an 8:00 class. Well, at first he managed to do that, but after awhile, it started catching up with him. But instead of making the choice to come in sooner and get more sleep, he continued to stay out late. And eventually, he started skipping his early classes thinking he could catch up later. But he didn't. And got himself into some real academic trouble because he didn't know how to handle his freedom.

So to all of our young adults and to you graduates in particular, I want you to know that in the months and years ahead you're going to enjoy a level of freedom you haven't known. Even if your parents have granted you a

measure of freedom already, you're entering a time when for the most part you'll be on your own.

You'll decide how you will use your time, what activities you will or will not be part of, whether or not you will drink alcohol or use drugs, and what your morals will be. If you choose well, then you will avoid many of the painful consequences that so many young adults have to deal with because they didn't know how to handle their freedom.

So if you are going to win the young adult trifecta, you must choose to handle your freedom in a God honoring way. For your sake I hope you choose well. This leads to the second trifecta question.

II. Who will you choose as your friends?

There is no question that young adults today place a high value on their friends. In some cases they place them higher than even members of their own family. With that being the case, making good choices about who your friends are going to be is crucial.

Unfortunately, some young adults simply look for whoever is out there who will accept them regardless of how they live their lives. The thought of being alone is so scary that they convince themselves that they can manage the worldly behavior of their friends without it impacting their own spiritual lives. And for awhile that's true. But most will discover that bit by bit their resolve begins to weaken. And eventually they find themselves making huge compromises in the way they live just to maintain the connection.

To avoid this, you must be very intentional about seeking out solid Christian friends as soon as possible. If you're going off to college, then look at some of the Christian groups that are on your campus. Attend worship at a local church. Do everything you can to get connected with other believers.

If you're heading off to the work force or the military, your goal is much the same. Stay involved in church, look for opportunities to socialize with other Christian young adults. Do whatever you have to do to surround yourself with friends who hold the same Christian values that you do.

Here's why. During your young adult years, you'll making some of the most important decisions of your life that in some cases will impact the rest of your life. Decisions about career, marriage, children, finances, and church involvement will be made during these years.

I have heard more than once the sad admission of poor decisions that were made during these years because they didn't have friends who were

holding them accountable to the spiritual values they were raised with. Don't let that happen to you.

And while I'm on it, let me remind you that just because a person says that he or she is a Christian means nothing. You'll discover even more than you already have that a lot of folks claim the title but don't live the life. You must look for those who are at least trying to follow Christ.

Personally, I will forever be grateful for some of the college friends that I had who encouraged me to stay true to myself. We helped each other and we were both the better for it.

So to all of the young adults here today, I want you really think about the friends you're going to make and the friends you already have. And I want to challenge you to build friendships with those who have your spiritual best interest at heart. If you'll do that, you'll be well on your way to winning the spiritual trifecta. Now for the last question.

III. What will you do with your faith?

According to a recent study done by Lifeway, 70% of Christian young adults drop out of church for at least a year when they're between 18 and 22 years of age. Thankfully, 2/3rds of them will eventually make their way back in. But that still leaves approximately 25% of Christian young adults who are lost to the church perhaps for the rest of their lives.

The reasons for dropping out were many. But nearly 97% of them indicated that changes in their personal life such as moving out of town, making new friends, and other lifestyle adjustments was why they left church. What that tells me is that Christian young adults must make some intentional decisions about what they're going to do with their faith when they get out of high school. For staying spiritually connected isn't going to just happen on its own. It must be chosen.

So let me encourage you to do three things as you move through your young adult years. First, find a local church and get involved. That may be hard at first, but stay at it. And when you find a place that seems like a good fit, don't just be an occasional Sunday morning pew sitter. Get connected. Find a Sunday School class or a small group to get involved in. Sing in the choir, go on mission trips. These are the things that will help your faith keep growing.

Second, find your people. What I mean is find some good Christian friends at the church you attend, where you work, where you go to school or wherever. Just find them. Look for them wherever you can. But find them and find them quickly.

Finally, keep filling your mind with God's truth. As you move into your young adult years, you'll be increasingly bombarded with messages from the world. Unless you're intentional about keeping your mind focused on God's truth, you'll soon discover that the faith you once had will start to erode. And you will replace God's truth with your professor's truth, your friends' truth or even your own truth. Don't let that happen. There is no substitute for God's truth. His way is the only way to live.

So that's the young adult trifecta. It has to do with freedom, friends and faith. It's part of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And in order to win this race, you must make good choices in all three. As you know, the byline for the youth ministry is "running to win." So that's the challenge I leave with you this morning. Run to win. Settle for nothing less than crossing the finish line of the race God has set before you. And no matter where your race takes you, know that your church family will be praying for you and cheering you on to victory.