

CHALLENGING YOUTH

“WHO IS MY GOD AND HOW WILL I SERVE HIM?”

I. CHILDHOOD

II. ADOLESCENCE

III. YOUNG ADULTHOOD

IV. CRUCIAL QUESTIONS CALL FOR CRUCIAL DECISIONS

For our sessions I have been asked to share with you about God's Financial Generosity. God is immensely God has so many faces.

Do you serve a friendly God—a vengeful God—a distant God—a God of power?

Who do you feel He really is?

What do you want Him to do in your life?

Let us discover who your God was, is now and will be in the Future.

INTRODUCTION

“Who is my God and how will I serve him?” was a key issue in my personal life when I was your age. — leader-share your own testimony

“Who is my God and how will I serve him?” That is the key question we want to think about today.

The Conference Purpose: Why today? What is so important now?? What are the questions? Let me explain what we have planned for you today. Pastor Anatoly has seen how lovely you are. He knows many of the weak conditions in the smaller country churches. Anatoly respects you and wants to honor you by giving you some new insights and opportunities today. He told me, “Abraham, we have so many wonderful young people here in western Ukraine that need an anointing from God. They are precious young people that could do beautiful things with their lives and assist in our churches if they received a visitation from God. I hope they will discover the beauty that God has for them and how God wants them to live a rich, full lifestyle serving Him and honoring Him.” Anatoly asked, “Will you come, Abraham, and present to our young people a vision of the new opportunities that God has for them?”

Conference Procedures: So today I want to discuss the 3 most vital questions of life with you. Then we want to fill out a questionnaire that Brother Anatoly can use to help other young people in your church back home who could not come today. Then we will have a small group discussion time here so you can share how you feel about these 3 most important questions in life. So this is not a conference to sit and listen; this is a conference to participate. Participation is crucial! Soon I will separate those that want to participate and those that do not. We have a very serious topic to consider and in order to consider it we need your participation.

Decision Time: That is why we are here today! To deal with this key question. *“Who is my God and How will I Serve Him?”* That is why we called you together. From time to time, we need to analyze *“Who is my God and How will I Serve Him?”*

You are no longer children. You are young adults now. You can no longer hide behind your parents or church leaders. This is decision time my dear friends. You are going to have to make some choices like Joshua.

The future is in your hands. Your future and the future of the country and the future of your church rest in your decision. You need to make some clear cut decisions as to where you want your life to go. What do you want your church to become? What do you want to offer to your yet unborn children? You need to make some decisions! You need to make some real **crucial** decisions. And you will need to make these decisions this morning. That is why I have come. That is why I am here. I want to help you make a number of right decisions today

I. CHILDHOOD

Often children brought up in Christian homes decide at an early age to love Jesus and give their hearts to Him. Hallelujah!!! This is wonderful! Why wait until you are old.

However a child's decision is often very literal and very physical. In other words their understanding and commitment is to a literal, physical Jesus, as in a picture. Our young son Samuel once saw a man with a long beard in another car and shouted "Mom, Mom, look, look, there is Jesus"

As they mature, they need to grow in their understanding of God, and as our understanding develops, we need to make new commitments to God.

Without further development you will have a person in an adult world with a childish faith. In other words you have a stunted Christian. The Christian may be mature in all other areas of life but his faith in God is still that of a child. So he is unbalanced and an invalid spiritually.

Do you know anyone like that? Do you have any friends like that? A relative perhaps who seemed 4 years ago such a great Christian and now his life is a drag. Have you wondered what happened to him? They did not mature spiritually! They are spiritual dwarfs and their lives are far from desirable. That is why we are here today! That is why we called you together. From time to time, we need to analyze "***Who is my God and How will I Serve Him?***"

II. ADOLESCENCE

You are no longer children. I trust many of you have already made good spiritual choices. Some of you have perhaps already developed holy lifestyles. Children in early adolescence experience great bodily changes. They also change emotionally and they begin to think in more abstract non-childish ways. This usually is a time when children begin to drop the physical image of Jesus and begin to think of God in greater and more abstract terms as Creator and Redeemer. Puberty marks a time of great spiritual significance and often lifetime spiritual decisions are made.

Some of you work with children of about 12 or 13 in Sunday school and camps, etc. This gives you great opportunity to help many make deep lifetime choices of becoming a Christian or of dedicating their lives to Christ. The spiritual result of puberty should be many conversions to Christ and many public testimonies through baptism among our church young people.

This whole scene should mark a new spiritual era in changing from Christian children to Christian young people. It is a very important step. It is crucial in the development towards becoming an active Christian adult with Godly priorities. Let us see who has already made some new and deeper spiritual decision. All those who are baptized please stand. Wonderful! Most of you have already made a commitment beyond childhood and want to go on with Christ as your Savior into adulthood. That is truly wonderful.

Some I noticed still need to make that giant leap. I hope that today you will make a choice to get baptized very soon. I hope today you will lay off childish things and take on young adulthood spiritually and that you will give public testimony of your faith in baptism. Bodily you are full grown, perhaps mentally you are super smart but without a public baptismal commitment you are still a spiritual baby. You have much catching up to do before you will be ready to be a mature spiritual adult that is a valuable member of the church of Jesus Christ.

This conference today is not for spiritual babies. This conference today is for those who have already been baptized and want to go on to the fullness of Christ as mature spiritual adults. Today we want to discuss spiritual things on a much, much deeper level than childhood faith and baptism and being saved. So if you have not made a public commitment to Christ through baptism, pay extra close attention to the beautiful opportunities God has for you.

III. YOUNG ADULTHOOD

As I mentioned there is more beyond childhood faith and an adolescent commitment to God for salvation and baptism. Today we want to discuss commitments and lifestyles that portray "***Who is my God and How will I serve Him?***" These are questions that need to be faced by young adults like yourself. You are no longer children or adolescents going through puberty.

Physically: You are beautiful young ladies and attractive handsome young men now. Your bodies have been developing and becoming beautiful and attractive. Your bodies will continue to develop and will begin to crave for your own lifetime partner. This is natural and God said that it was very good.

Mentally: Your minds have also been developing and are craving certain fulfillment. No one is happy to be dumb; no one is happy to have a lousy job for the rest of his or her life. So you go to college or take some extra evening classes or you learn to become a master in the vocation you chose. You just want to develop.

Emotionally: Emotionally you are changing. You feel different from the way your parents do. You have your own opinions. You want to make your own choices and not always do what mom and dad or some older church leader tells you. You want to explore; visit friends, visit another city or if you have money spend some of it foolishly the big city . The big city loves to take money from poor country folks. You are very likely emotionally dissatisfied with many things. Your job is not good enough; you are still single and wish you weren't; your parents are too poor; and your grandmother is too bossy; the economy is the pits and your local government is probably lousy. So emotionally your life is in turmoil.

Spiritually: And what about your spiritual situation? Would 'boring' be a good description? You survived childhood. God is important to you. You love the choir. But church service is the same every Sunday. You precisely know that Brother So and So will repeat his usual sermon. You know that the pastor will end the service with a sermon on salvation for sinners even though there are no sinners in church that morning. There is going to be at least one sermon each Sunday morning that criticizes everything you do and condemns you and tells you there is an angry harsh God just waiting to pounce upon you and punish you. Well that is the routine of a Christian's life, right? What else is there to expect? This is Ukraine. We are Baptists; that is what we do.

The Catholics or Orthodox do the same thing, only a little bit different. Of course we are saved; we are Baptists; we are better. And God? Well, perhaps you wish He would come around sometime and really do something. If from time to time you have had such feelings and are wondering if there is more to the Christian life; or does God have more that He wants you to have, experience, and enjoy. Well, let me tell you "You have come to the right place this morning. There is more; much more; infinitely more. Hallelujah!

IV. CRUCIAL QUESTIONS CALL FOR CRUCIAL DECISIONS

Making Crucial Decisions: Now let us look at the 3 most important questions of life. Let me repeat: That is why we are here today! To deal with 3 questions. That is why we called you together. From time to time, we need to analyze "**Who is my God and How will I Serve Him?**" You are no longer children. You are young adults now. You can no longer hide behind your parents or church leaders. This is a time of decision, my dear friends. You are going to have to make some choices.

The future is in your hands. Your future and the future of the country and the future of your church rest on your decisions. You need to make some clear cut decisions as to where you want your life to go. What do you want your church to become. What do you want to offer to your yet unborn children. You need to make some decisions! You need to make some real crucial decisions. And you will need to make these decisions this morning. That is why I have come. That is why I am here. I want to help you make a number of right decisions today.

The 3 questions are: "Who is my God and what priority do I want to give Him in my life?" "Whom should I choose as my partner for life?" And "What vocation do I want to enter?"

These are crucial questions and if you have not answered them already then you must answer them today. Why today? Because tomorrow you will be adults and then it is too late. I do not need to answer those questions. I already have answered them. Pastor Anatoly does not need to answer these questions. He has already answered them. We older adults have answered each of these questions either good or somewhat less good. But the questions have been answered and our lifestyle shows every day how we answered them.

Now you must answer these 3 questions. You must answer them by faith. You must answer them before you have experience. You cannot wait until you have experience; then it is too late. You cannot answer them when you are older; then it is too late. These questions must be answered before you begin your adult life. That means they must be answered now. Today! Just like Joshua had to answer these questions and make a spiritual commitment before he began his life's work and ministry. So must you today!

Let us look at question 1. "Who will be my God and what priority do I want to give Him in my life?" Who is this God you have heard about all of your life? Do you know Him—really? Or is He removed from your life except when you step in the church doors? Do you really believe He cares about every little detail of your life? Or in your heart of hearts do you think He really must be too busy to care? Do you really believe He is good? Or do you say He is good, but in your heart fear that He only wants difficult, unpleasant things for you? When you pray, do you really talk to Him, or do you just say the things you've heard prayed your whole life? Do you love spending time with Him, reading His Word, drawing close to Him, or do you see it as a duty that every "good" Christian must endure?

Think for a moment about the verse in II Chronicles 16:9-- For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are **fully** committed to him. Yes, God actually sees everything we do. (etc, etc) But notice the promise here. He is there for those who are fully committed to Him!

There is an easy answer of course: The creator God and Jesus Christ the Savior. That answer distinguishes you from the other kids in your town. But what did you really do **to display Jesus this week.**

What do you really do downtown on Friday evening? What jokes do you listen to or tell? How much time do you spend reading your Bible each week? Do you go out alone in the fields sometimes to seek God personally?

I know of girls who dress normally at home but when they go to visit the big city they secretly take other provocative clothes along that mom doesn't know about. I know of girls with beautiful voices who love to sing on the platform but also enjoy displaying other beautiful body parts. How tempting it is for some of you young men to look at the pornographic kiosks or sneak a beer with some old school mates.

So far you see you have grown up with your parents and church leaders' standards and faith. But now you are getting too old to hide behind that. Your own reputation is getting to be known among the younger generation in your town. It is not what you say and do on Sunday morning — no — God says, they confess me with their mouths, but their hearts are far from me. So your oral testimony counts for only a small part, it is the priorities in your way of living that show what you really believe and whom you are really serving and to what extent God is really important in your life.

Each person on earth must answer this question of: "Who is my God and what priority do I want to give Him in my life?" At the end of each life comes a funeral at which people will analyze how you have lived. It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. Make your choice this morning ; make it now; make it well before you begin your adult life and the judgment you will hear is "well done; well done" That is why I am here this morning. I hope I can help. All I want to be is an instrument. I hope you will make the right choice.

Now let us look at question 2: "Whom should I choose as my partner for life?" Most young people in Ukraine do not give any thought to such a choice. They do not even consider the question at all. They are short sighted, interested only in the here and now. They just want to live with someone because living together is fun. Sharing your body with someone feels good.

Most young people are totally ignorant of God's great beauty and thrilling physical enjoyment that He designed to flow out of a lifetime commitment. God designed that the consequences of illicit sex would be disappointment, emptiness even diseases and early death. God designed sex as the physical bond of holy matrimony. God designed the sexual relationship to be fully and freely enjoyed as the expression of unity within marriage. But most of you have been brought up in church. Many of your families are good families; many of you know of precious, good, wonderful Christian couples in your churches.

What will be your decision? For this decision you cannot hide behind your parents or church leaders. This decision is not made in church. Just last week I was told that a Baptist girl, the daughter of a deacon, and her fiancée committed sin. They did not do that in church. They made a choice. Did they choose: Who will be my God and what priority do I want to give Him in my life? They probably did not even think about that at all — but I think that was exactly the choice they made and I believe they chose that physical bodily enjoyment was more important than God in their life. It seems to me that God had a very low priority in their life.

You see everything you do depends upon how you answer question one. Only after answering question one comes question two: Whom should I choose as my partner for life? Abraham & Diane chose to make serving God as missionaries their primary commitment and after that chose to marry each other. . Only after settling the "lifetime" part of question number **one** can you answer what kind of a partner you would like to have.

God gives us only good things. God wants to give us the very best. God wants to give you the most special person just suited for you for a lifetime of enjoyment. Perhaps you have messed up a bit **when you grew up**. while you were in college or so. Perhaps you are a girl with a past. Perhaps total purity has gone out of your life. Praise God, He wants to forgive and He wants to give you a new start today. We as God's servants are here to help you find a new beginning today. Basically you will choose a life partner that is compatible with your own character and interests. Therefore the real answer to question 2 lies in how you answered question 1.

Now let us look at question 3: What vocation do I want to enter? You probably have thought about that, but how do you decide? How do you know what you should do with the rest of your life? Maybe you only think of a job as survival—you have to eat. (When Abraham was young he had to take on many different jobs, working in factories, in construction, and on farms but his heart was always seeking to find a better way to serve God.

There are all kinds of good jobs out there. Fortunately God made it so that the good jobs go to the aggressive seekers and the young people that really try hard. God knows who is worthy of a good job and rewards such active young men and women. God gives the leftover jobs that no one really wants to the lazy and non-active people. God gives everyone a chance; and you are here this morning because God wants to give you the best chance of all. I hope you will take that change. I hope you will be like Joshua and say "yes" to God.

God has created us with different gifts and because of that we like different jobs and activities. But God has also said that if you are faithful doing a task He will then give you new talents and opportunities. Life is full for those who trust God to lead them to the right job, work or ministry. God wants His people to continually expand and learn to do new things and become experts and go on.

For those without God's guidance, life often becomes very boring and mundane. Most people don't even come close to living up to their total fulfillment and capabilities for which God designed and created them. Because of

such disappointments people become disillusioned, immoral, drunkards and their lives become a slur of downwards disappointments ending in only wasted bodies and ruined lives. How to choose the best vocation does not depend on what is the nicest job; which job offers the most money; where are the cleanest work conditions; what is the easiest to do. All of these things change and usually they become boring and mundane in a short time.

The main question in choosing a good fulfilling vocation is not at all question number 3; it is question number 1 "Who is my God and how do I want to serve Him?"

Either God is for you or the devil is — choose this morning Whom it should be! If you want to be a bartender you don't need to pray a lot about it. Others want to do Christian ministry because foreigners will pay a good salary or you can maybe emigrate. Choosing a good job involves the whole area of motives. If you answer question 3 on the basis of question 1 you will begin by asking God to guide you into any job decision.

With God included question 3 will become immediately a question of motives. Will I honor God in my work? How will I honor God? Will I serve people? Will I serve my clients or my boss? Will I each day do something extra that is not required of me? We are going to explore question 3 in more detail this morning. But the basis for question 3 lies in how you answer question 1.

CONCLUSION

In one lecture we cannot cover all possibilities in detail of course. . So, I just wanted to share about priorities. So, you can think about the extra abundance God wants to give young people like you who want to give God first place in their life.

So the 3 greatest questions in life are before you. They are: "Who is my God and what priority do I want to give Him in my life?" "Who should I choose as my partner for life?" "And what vocation should I enter?"

But the greatest of all is: "Who is my God and what priority do I want to give Him in my life?"

I challenge you to work together today to discover God's highest for your life. That is why we are here today. It is the hope of Pastor Anatoly and myself my hope that you will discover brand new possibilities for yourself and that later on today you want to dedicate yourself to receive God's best.

We will now take a break and let you answer the questionnaire. After the questionnaire we will have a time for discussion so you can share how you feel.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

Practical assignment

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➤ **Talk to your pastor or elder of youth** with whom you are comfortable and who understands you. Share some of your experiences from today; insights you have gained and any spiritual commitments you have made. Later on share about your Day of Prayer experience. Then share with your youth group as well. Ask for advice. If he finds it difficult to understand your new interests and expressions ask him if he will pray for you. Then give him a list of 4 -5 personal prayer requests.

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➤ **Spend a day in prayer and possibly fasting.**

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Go to a very quiet place for minimally 6 hours and wait on God.

Take a Bible, a hymnbook, a note book. Alternate reading from the Bible and then praying the passage back to God. Sit in silence and let God guide your conscience. Write down new spiritual insights and any decisions you make. Spend much time in praise and thanksgiving for specific details in your life and that of your church.

➤ **Start a Bible study group of unbelievers.** This is not so easy and won't happen immediately. Seek opportunities, make a plan and set a date when you want to begin. Then pray for God to

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provide people that are interested in it. Perhaps start with a guitar and some singing times together which later on can turn into Bible studies. Buy some Gospels of Mark before you begin. Ask individuals in the group "What is your favorite verse in this chapter? Why?" "What do you find most interesting in this chapter? Why? Etc. Use practical testimonies a lot. Close each session with something beautiful about Jesus, like: John 3:16 or I am the way, etc.