

Valley of Vision

BY STEVE HOLT

"The Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them." (1 Sam. 17:3)

In the valley of vision are the hearts, minds, and future of a generation. Every generation is faced with a valley of vision. Every generation is faced with a valley of decision. The struggle of leadership for each generation of a culture is a struggle for vision. The writer of the Proverbs reminds us, "Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained." (Prov. 29:18 NAS). Without a clear vision, people are out of control, unable to make decisions, unbridled in their passions.

The view from the valley always affords two mountain tops. These mountains, lying on opposite sides of the valley, represent two distinct worldviews, two distant visions, and two vastly different futures. Each generation will have to decide which vision, which mountain, which future it wants. As I see it, every generation must decide which of two distinct visions it will follow. There is the Vision of the Philistines and the Vision of David.

On one side of the valley stand the Philistines of our culture. Represented by the Goliaths of our time, the Philistines call out to us with all of this world's values, systems, power and authority. Like the Philistines of three thousand years ago, who controlled

the iron (note the weapons of Goliath in 1 Sam 17:4-7) and had the advantage over Israel militarily and economically, the world under the sway of the Evil One has control over the media and political kingdoms of the earth. The Goliaths of our time taunt the people of God with the same words of the giant of antiquity, "I defy the armies of Israel this day..." (1 Samuel 17:10).

Across the valley stands another mountain, the Israel, the church of a generation. Represented by the Davids of the people of God, are those young people who possess little of what the world considers "successful" but are deeply concerned for the glory of God and the cause of Christ. They echo in their hearts the words of David as he faced Goliath,

"You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin (the world's values and vision). But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand... Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

And so in 2009, this current generation of young people, sociologically called the "Bridger Generation" (those born after 1984), face two visions, two mountains, two hopes for their future. They must decide which vision they will follow. Without overstating my case, I believe I'm correct in saying that no generation has so faced such an onslaught of perversion, rebellion and satanic temptations as the current one. Let's look at the statistics.

The Philistine Vision

George Barna reports that 83% of teenagers in this country today believe that "moral truth depends on

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the circumstances,” and that “only 6% believe that moral truth is absolute.” Perhaps most disturbing of all is that “only 9% of born-again teens believe in moral absolutes.” These are the lowest numbers ever recorded in our country for a demographic group.

Chuck Colson has said, “I can’t think of a more urgent need than enabling young people to understand their faith and preparing them to defend it against the onslaught of secular thought they encounter in their schools and in popular culture.”

What is causing such a meltdown in our youth? Why have they lost confidence in biblical and moral absolutes? A Media Tidal Wave is drowning our young people:

- Television and movies are dripping with violence, sex, and alcohol: nearly 61% of all TV programs contain violence, with children’s programming being the worst.
- Each year teens absorb nearly 15,000 sexual references, with less than 170 of them referring to abstinence, birth control or sexually transmitted diseases.
- A recent analysis showed that 70% of all prime-time programming depicted alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use.
- Consider MTV, whose parent company, Viacom, recorded revenues of \$6.84 billion in 2004. While MTV would never say they aim to destroy a generation, it is in fact doing that by seeking to make money off young people, no matter what it takes.
- The company has organized a cradle to the grave program for kids, starting with Nickelodeon, then Nick Jr., then finally MTV.
- In a recent MTV survey of its audience the question was asked what they thought of the moral code of the 7 deadly sins (or also known as the 7 capital vices), which are lust, glutton, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride. The survey showed that the audience not only didn’t consider these sins but actually as virtues!

Who creates all this entertainment for the Philistines of our culture? Sociologists conducted a survey of 104 of Hollywood’s elite, asking the most influential writers and producers a number of ideological questions. The findings showed:

- 5% believe that homosexuality is wrong
- 16% believe that adultery is wrong
- 93% seldom or never go to worship services
- 97% believe in a woman’s right to abort
- 99% believe that TV should be more critical of Judeo Christian values!

A study of 1,792 teens showed that watching violence on TV made one more violent, and watching sex on TV made one more likely to engage in sex! Now a brand new study done by RAND Corpora-

tion, published in *Pediatrics*, shows beyond a doubt they are related! The new study found that those who watch such programming are twice as likely to engage in the activity!

The largest consumers of internet porn are kids between the ages of 13 to 17 years old. Nielson Media Research tells us that one of the highest rated television shows among girls 12-17 years old is “Will and Grace,” a show portraying two lead characters as homosexuals. There are 300,000+ pornographic web sites for teens; the number grows daily!

But it must be different with our Christian kids, right? The Nehemiah Institute that provides testing to over 20,000 students from 1000 schools has found that 85% of Christian kids that attend public school do not embrace a biblical Christian Worldview!

What about teens in Christian schools? Statistics are basically the same
63% don’t believe Jesus is the Son of God
58% believe all faiths teach equally valid truths

93% OF HOLLYWOOD’S MOST INFLUENTIAL WRITERS AND PRODUCERS SELDOM OR NEVER GO TO WORSHIP SERVICES

- 51% don’t believe Jesus rose from the dead
- 65% don’t believe Satan is a reality
- 68% don’t believe the Holy Spirit is a real entity

Every day 71 million young people in America are being hammered with the “bronze javelin” of our Philistine culture. Every day in America:

- 8000 teens become infected with an STD. This year, 3 million teens will be infected.
- 1000 unwed girls become mothers . . . every day in America!
- 1106 teen girls have abortions
- 500 adolescents begin using illicit drugs
- 1000 teens begin drinking alcohol
- 135,000 kids bring a gun or weapon to school . . . every day!

Josh McDowell writes,

The issue here is that our young people lack a relationship with spiritual mentors who are models of Christlikeness, and these youth are building their faith and lives on a false foundation—a distorted view of who Christ is, why He came to earth, and what the Bible and truth really are. And that has completely falsified the intent and purpose of Christianity. They read the same Bible, talk of a personal relationship with God, and say biblical truth is important to their lives, but their beliefs and behavior are not consistent with what the Bible identifies as a true follower of Christ. We need to help our young people rebuild their faith and relationships with spiritual mentors from the ground up based on the true foundation of Christ.

The Davidic Vision

Every generation, faced with seemingly insurmount-

able odds, needs a fresh Davidic vision. Young Davids must be raised up who, like the sons of Isacchar, “[have] an understanding of the times, [and know] what Israel should do...” (1 Ch 12:32). The historic David who entered the valley of Elah was inexperienced, naive and seemingly too immature for such a fight. But what God found most needful could not be seen or observed through age, ability or experience. God saw something even the prophet Samuel couldn’t recognize. For God even had to say to Samuel,

Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. (1 Sam 16:7)

Nothing has really changed in 3,000 years. God is still looking at the heart of young men and women who have been called out by Him to make an impact upon their generation. This new generation is poised for a mighty encounter with the living God. In spite of the defiant armies of the Philistines, there is much to be hopeful about. 56% of the Bridger Generation say they are “looking for meaning in life,” and “consider spirituality and faith to be a positive dimension to life.” 44% even say that the Bible is a “great influence” in their lives.

Like Jesse of old, the often forgotten father who raised up young David, 78% of the Bridgers say that the most influential people in their lives are their parents.



Josh McDowell continues,

It may feel better to identify Hollywood, MTV, and today’s culture as the main source of our problem, but the fact remains that we as parents have the greatest influence and opportunity to instill our values and faith within our children. Sure the culture is a powerful enemy and has had a devastating influence on our young people, and it is true that this influence has distorted their perception of Christianity, truth, and reality. But would our young people be where they are today if parents and the church were models of Christlikeness, relationally connecting with their kids, engaging in a concerted effort to reveal who God really is, and leading them to respond as a true follower of Christ... If we’re going to reclaim the next generation, then the home and the church must join forces together like never before.

Our youth are looking across a great valley and they see two mountain tops. We all stand in the valley of vision. As a parent of seven children, I take this charge very seriously. Now is the time to pray for, challenge, mentor, and equip this next generation for Christ. There are young Davids just waiting for a robust and compelling vision. May we provide it with vigor, joy, and hope. f

References:

The Last Christian Generation by Josh McDowell, Green Key Books, Holiday Florida, 2006; *Battle Cry for a Generation* by Ron Luce, Cook Communications, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2005; *The Father Connection* by Josh McDowell, Broadman and Holmen Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1996; *Real Teens* by George Barna, Regal, Ventura, California, 2001; 2007 National Day of Prayer message by Dr. John MacArthur

WHAT WILL THE NEXT GENERATION LOOK LIKE:

- Builders (born 1927-1945): 65% Bible based believers
- Boomers (born 1946-1964): 35% Bible based believers
- Busters (born 1965-1983): 16% Bible based believers
- Bridgers (born 1984 or later): 4% Bible based believers

While many today might classify themselves as believers, only 4% of this next generation would affirm themselves as Bible-believing Christians!

Think about it, with 35% of the Boomers saying they are born again believers, they still produced:

- Morally corrupt films and TV programs
- The sexual revolution that has changed the sexual habits of two generations
- A pornographic industry unprecedented in history
- Civil initiatives promoting gay marriage

- Abortion that has seen the killing of over 50 million babies
- Battles to remove the 10 commandments from all public buildings
- The advent of the ACLU
- Fights to take “under God” out of our Pledge of Allegiance
- Almost 50% of our marriages ending in divorce

Ron Luce, the founder of Teen Mania, writes, “If these are the struggles we face now, with 35% of the largest generation of Americans affirming a belief in Scripture, can you imagine what America will be like when today’s teens become the next generation to dominate the population, with only 4% currently claiming to be Bible-believing Christians.” f

Battle Cry for a Generation by Ron Luce, Cook Communications, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2005.