

Why Should I Listen to God?

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Introduction.

- A. I know you young folks today will find it hard to believe, but it wasn't all that long ago that I was in high school, and I still remember what it was like. Outwardly, things were different back then. It was back in the 1990s, the Grunge Decade, and that had an effect on what we wore and what we listened to. Instead of wearing Abercrombie T-shirts and cargo pants, I wore baggy jeans, oversized flannel shirts, and combat boots to school. Instead of listening to Outkast and Shakira, I listened to stuff like Nirvana and Pearl Jam.
- B. Underneath all the goofy clothes and weird music, though, things were basically the same. My high-school world was divided into cool people and not-cool people. The cool people were easy to pick out. They all had the expensive clothes and the perfectly done hair. More important still, though, was what they did. They always had a boyfriend or girlfriend. They went to clubs and huge parties on the weekend. They were having sex, and they seemed to be having a great time doing it. Basically the same thing happens today.
- C. For all of this, I was on the outside. I was not-cool, but I desperately wanted to be cool, so one of the things I did through high school was play the class clown. Looking back, it's easy to see why: I wanted the attention. Cool is something that just about every kid wants to be. Some kids are so driven by this that they go to all the parties and hang out at the clubs on Friday night. They start being the ones who drink, who have sex, and by doing all the things that the cool kids do, they think they will convince everyone else that they're cool too.
- D. There's one problem with that. A lot of the things that we think are cool rites of passage are sins. Getting drunk is a sin. Wearing revealing clothing is a sin. Getting sexually involved before marriage is a sin. They're all part of a lifestyle that is exactly the opposite of what God wants us to do. So what do you do about it? Should you try to be like the cool kids who sin to show how cool they are, or should we try to serve God instead? I know it's a tough decision, especially when it seems like serving God will doom you to a life of not-cool. I can't make you pick the right answer. All I can do is help you try to make the right decision, so today, I want to give you some answers, answers to the question, "Why should I listen to God?"

I. It's Smart.

- A. The first reason you should listen to God is because it's smart. If you pay attention to what God tells you, it will keep you out of a lot of trouble. Look at Moses' words to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:24, which tell us that God instructed for their good always. This means that if we follow God's laws, we will be better off for it.
- B. There's a reason for this: we often are not wise enough to see the consequences of our actions. As Solomon says in Proverbs 14:12, the things that seem like a good idea to us are often things that will destroy us. God's laws guide us away from things that look short-term good, but are actually long-term bad. They protect us.
- C. This is absolutely true of all the temptations that surround young people. All of those cool people who are drinking and sleeping around are following a way that seems right to them right now, but will end up hurting them very badly, sometimes hurting them for the rest of their lives. It happens all the time.
- D. Let me start off by telling you about my friend back in Texas. Let's call her "Maggie."
 1. Lauren's been e-mailing Maggie a lot recently because she just had her baby, a baby girl. The problem is, Maggie isn't married. The problem is that Maggie is still 15. Now, you might be thinking, "She's probably one of those trashy girls who got what she'd been asking for for years," but that's not true. Maggie comes from a great family of Christians. Maggie's at services every time the doors are open, she was a regular at my wife's girls' Bible study, and she LOOKS like a good girl. If she went here, you'd be friends with her.
 2. So what happened? How did this "good" girl end up as a teenage mom? Well, there was this boy who lived near her, the running back on the football team, and he was one of those cool kids. They got to talking, and he convinced her to have sex with him. They only had sex twice. Both times, they practiced what the world calls "safe" sex. From one of those two encounters, Maggie got pregnant. That's it.
 3. The point is, guys, there is no such thing as "safe" sex. It's a lie made up by evil people in the world who want to convince you to sin instead of following God. No matter what precautions you take, every time you have sex before you are married, you are rolling the dice. This ended badly for Maggie, but it could have been far worse. What if this Running Back Romeo had had HIV? Instead of just a baby, Maggie could be looking at both her and her daughter dying before she turns 30. It happens every day.
- E. All right, but what about the girls who sleep around, don't get pregnant, and don't pick up some disease? They're fine, right? Not exactly. Here's another story:
 1. When I was in college I had three female friends who were cool people. They were smart, they were gorgeous, and they lived a life like one of those TV shows on the WB. They drank, they did drugs, they partied, they had all kinds of sexual encounters. They lived life like the world says we should live it.

2. For a class project one year, I had to give out a survey about some basic life questions. I gave each of my three friends a copy, they gave it back to me, and I recorded the results for the project. One of the questions asked "What is your biggest regret in life," and each one of these cool, beautiful party girls said that her biggest regret was that she started having sex. Imagine that! Basically, they weren't living this sinful life because they loved it. They kept having sex because they figured they were already ruined and they didn't know how to stop. I have never known a woman who had premarital sex who did not come to bitterly regret it, and I have never known a woman who waited till marriage who wasn't glad she did.
- F. OK, so sleeping around is bad for girls, but what about for guys? Here, let me bring up Running Back Romeo again. After Maggie's dad found out that she was pregnant, he went and had a little talk with Romeo. As a result, Romeo is now on the hook to pay child support for Maggie's baby. Over the next 21 years, that's going to cost Romeo about \$250,000, and if you think that having sex twice is worth \$250 grand, you need your head examined. Consequences work both ways, but even if that weren't true, if you love some girl, guys, do you really want to sleep with her, knowing that it will be the biggest regret of her life? True love waits.
 - G. All of this is just one tiny sample of the consequences. I could tell you about alcohol and drugs, too, about my cool friend from high school who became an alcoholic, my cool friend from college who became a speed addict, but we don't have time for it. The point stays the same: it's smart to follow God.

II. It Pleases Your Parents.

- A. However, listening to God isn't important just because it's smart. It's important because it pleases your parents. Now, I know that making Mom and Dad happy isn't high on your list of priorities right now, but it's an important one. The thing is, for as long as they stay alive, you are stuck with your parents. That's not true of friends. Right now, I'm not in touch with anybody I was friends with in high school. The girl I had a mad crush on for three years, I haven't even talked to her in six years. But guess what? My parents are still around. I talk to them every week. Your relationship with them is the important one.
- B. Also, it's important to please your parents because they are the ones who care about you the most. Now, I don't mean to say that your friends at school don't care about you. No matter who they are, though, they don't care about you as much as your parents do. Here's proof: how many of your friends do you think would be willing to change your stinky diaper? Or if any of your friends needed to have his diaper changed, would you be willing to do it? Gross thought, isn't it? Well, that gross act of diaper-changing is something your parents did for you hundreds of times. That is A LOT of love. That tells you that when your parents tell you to do something you don't like, it's not because they enjoy being mean to you. It's because they love you and want the best for you. Remember: when in doubt, the real friend is the one who is willing to change your diaper.
- C. Finally, you should care about pleasing your parents because your parents might know more about your life than you think. Remember what Solomon says in Proverbs 4:20-22. Believe it or not, if you listen to your parents, you will probably end up about right. They have a lot of the same experiences that I do. They know what friends you should have, what things you should be allowed to do, because of all the young people they can remember from their high-school years who did the wrong thing and went down the drain. Now, this doesn't mean that parents are always right. My parents spent a lot of time telling me I should be a lawyer, not a preacher, and we all know how that turned out. However, when they start telling you what the Bible tells you too, you need to make them happy by doing what God is telling you to do.

III. It Pleases God.

- A. Finally, though, the last and best reason why you should listen to God is because that's what pleases Him. God is a loving God who created us and sustains us because of His love and His mercy, and all that He wants from us is for us to love Him in return. As 1 John 5:3 tells us, the way that we express our love for God is by keeping His commandments. That's it. If we choose to disregard what God wants, we're sending Him a clear signal. We're telling God that we love ourselves more than we love Him.
- B. Even beyond that, there's something else we need to remember about God. We need to remember that He is not just our Father. He is also our Judge, even for the things we do when we're young. Look at what Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 11:9. This is great advice for young people. Solomon is really saying two things:
 1. He's saying that it's really great to be young. There are a lot of fun things that you do when you're in high school, when you're in college, that you don't get the chance to do at any other point of your life. Enjoy it! Rejoice in your youth! Have a blast while you're in the band, or in the choir, or on the speech team, or on the volleyball team, or any of the other things you do in school. Enjoy those times! Forget about all of those things you think you want, but can't have, and enjoy just being where you are.
 2. But at the same time, don't let all the fun things start coming between you and God. Just because something looks fun doesn't make it right, and many of the things that young people do aren't right. Remember that God knows what you're doing, and that someday you will have to answer for what you do right now. Enjoy your life now, but don't forget that God will eventually judge you too.

Conclusion. If you're not serving God right now, you need to get right with Him today.