

9-10-1967

Turned On and Tuned Out

John Allen Chalk

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Recommended Citation

Chalk, John Allen, "Turned On and Tuned Out" (1967). *Herald of Truth Audio*. 174.
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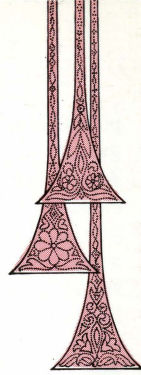
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Turned On and Tuned Out



Number 815
TRANSCRIPT OF THE

Herald of Truth
..... *radio programs*



HIGHLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST
radio program

P. O. Box 2439 Abilene, Texas 79604

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Turned On and Tuned Out

Some prefer the synthetic stimulants like Dexedrine and Benzedrine, commonly called "speed," by the users. Others pay from \$10 in San Francisco to \$25 in New York for a "lid" (that's 22 grams for those who don't know the terminology) of marijuana and from \$2 to \$5 for a "tab" (100 micrograms) of LSD. *Time* magazine recently estimated that eighty per cent of the citizens of the Haight-Asbury section of San Francisco (otherwise known as the "hippies"), in the magazine's words, "are steadily high on drugs. . . ." (P. 27, March 17, 1967). And the Federal Drug Agency estimates that "tens of thousands of college students" have tried LSD. Timothy Leary, the high priest of the drug cult, says that sixty-five per cent of all college students will use LSD at least once during their four academic years! (p. 6C, *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1966.)

Of course these figures and estimates do not consider the college students (and ex-students) who have graduated to heroin (called "horse") and opium ("junk"). What I'm talking to you students and others about today is the frightening spread of drug addiction within the youth culture of America and the world. This is the way one observer sees it: "Across the nation, teen-age addiction is soaring, and it is no longer confined to the slums. For in pills and

pot and LSD today's teen-agers are finding not only an avenue escape but a cool symbol of rebellion" (P. 90, *Time*, March 31, 1967). Is that what it is—an avenue of escape? Are we really seeing rebellion in the use of drugs among today's students? Then I want to ask, "Escape from what?" and "Rebellion against what or whom?" It now seems certain, to me at least, that the "now generation" has "turned on and tuned out." "Turned on" with alcohol, sex, and drugs, and "tuned out" purpose, meaning, life and God.

Please stay with me today as we honestly attempt to come to grips with the questions just asked and others as well. I want to discuss these things with you college students now on your way back to school for the 1967-68 sessions. Let me respectfully request that you also remember that there are a large number of non-college age people listening to this program at the same time. Actually, I'd like to speak to both groups—students and non-students alike; but this may be too much to ask.

The first thing we need to do is carefully examine how and why today's student has "turned on." The director of student psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin read an interesting paper at the May, 1967 meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Detroit. It dealt with the widening problem of student "alienation." The "turn on" or damaging use of drugs and sex as attributed in part, by the doctor, to the severe alienation occurring in the many students' lives (pp. 74-75, *U.S. News and World Report*, May 29, 1967). Students with this problem show "vague feelings of apathy, boredom, meaninglessness, and chronic unhappiness." As I read this description of the alienated student I couldn't help but vividly recall the picture I had of a University of Tennessee student who yawned and scratched his way through a prolonged and angry discussion with me about the significance of God and religion in his life. His strange actions spoke an unspoken message of boredom and apathy toward everything said in the conversation that he himself had desperately requested!

By "alienation" the doctor in this paper meant "an estrangement from the values of one's society and family" (and I must add, from God and the life He offers to all men). Much of this alienation is the result of campus loneliness, the doctor also discovered. "A student can spend months on a large campus without having a conversation with a person over thirty" (*Ibid.*, p. 79). Man's history does not wait long to see the first evidence of what estrangement and alienation do to the human spirit. If you are interested in reading this gripping account of man's first confusion, resulting from alienation and estrangement,

turn in your Bibles to *Genesis*, chapter two and three. I dare you to be honest enough to read them before you make a judgment about the Bible or before you react negatively to this suggestion!

I have often asked college students: "Do you want to become a contributing member of a human society?" "Have you looked at a friend of yours who is now twenty-five years old?" "What do you see in him or her?" "Have you committed yourself to any new causes lately?" "Have you dropped some old ones in the last few months?" "How many genuinely, interpersonal relationships do you have?" "Doesn't take long for that loneliness to become alienation, does it?"

Now the problem here is with what alienation finally drives a student to do. The ultimate weapon of the estranged student is "oblivion" (or what is commonly called "the flip-out"). Some college people, like a lot of others, choose physical oblivion—suicide. At least one thousand college students commit suicide every year with nine thousand more attempting it and ninety thousand more threatening it each year (p. 71, *U.S. News and World Report*, May 29, 1967). But this is more than a stateside problem: Iran's eighteen to twenty-five year olds commit ninety-five per cent of all that nation's suicides; America's group in this age bracket account for at least ten per cent of all self-murders. In fact, college suicides in this country rank as the campus' number two killer. The suicide rate on the campus is more than fifty per cent higher than among non-college young people of the same age. Someone asked this question last year, "At an age when high spirits and a curiosity about life ought to produce joy, it is ironic that so many choose the irreversible decision" (p. 114, *Time*, October 14, 1966). But this is not the whole picture. United Press International recently quoted Dr. Richard H. Seiden as saying that "a scientific prediction" indicates "there are going to be more and more suicides among American college students."

"With whom do you talk about life?" "Have you ever read what Jesus says about life?" Some college students are not open minded enough to read chapter six of Matthew's *Gospel*. "Are you?" "Have you talked lately with anyone about the meaning of life?" I don't mean the pooling of dormitory frustration. I mean with someone who can bring to the question of life's meaning a perspective different from your own. I have found some real perception in talking with people who have been over the road ahead of me. That's right, some older people! Or can't you tolerate another viewpoint?

Then there is "psychological oblivion"—"the psychedelic flip-out," as some call it. An official of New York's Bellevue Hospital recently estimated that New York has more than 10,000 users of LSD. In March, 1966, *Time* magazine reported 10,000 students tried LSD in the University of California system alone (p. 44, *Time*, March 11, 1966). Some have returned from their "trips" induced by the drug LSD with no apparent problems but countless others hit a psychic detour that destroyed them. Admittances to Bellevue Hospital last year averaged two new cases of psychotic illness per week resulting from the use of LSD-25. You have all heard the weird and tragic stories of what some students have done under the influence of this alleged "mind-consciousness-expanding" drug. But LSD isn't the only way to "turn on" psychologically. Marijuana is still highly popular, and certainly, according to Dr. Seymour L. Halleck, is "an emblem of alienation."

Isolation from adults and adult society, according to recent psychiatric studies, has encouraged college students to "turn on." Out of this loneliness and alienation has come severe depression, the inevitable result of a life with no direction, meaning, and purpose.

This flight of confusion and desperation is also reflected in the campus immorality. I could hardly believe the report, even after counseling with many college students. Twenty-four psychiatrists who treat University of Wisconsin students report that eighty-six per cent of the one hundred seven unmarried female student patients they treated had sexual relations with at least one person. Seventy-two per cent of these same one hundred seven patients had sexual relations with more than one person. The doctors revealed that the virginity rate at the university runs as low as twenty-two per cent.

My first question, naturally, concerned the reasons why these apparently well-adjusted girls, by modern standards, needed psychiatric help. Here were representatives of a large number of students who have psychologically "turned on" with illicit sex. But what has it really meant to them? Listen to the report: "While the student seems to be leading a stimulating sex life, he frequently complains that it is unsatisfying and meaningless" (p. 75, *U. S. News and World Report*, May 29, 1967). An official of the National Institute of Mental Health has called this kind of conduct part of a pattern of "unremitting anxiety." In other words, this kind of immoral conduct leads to the total breakdown and disintegration of the persons involved. My college friend, this is not God's way for His creatures who bear His image! It can only and invariably lead to spiritual and emotional destruction. What happens with the "new

permissiveness," Psychiatrist Robert Burns says, is that the student finds "intimacy without emotion" (p. 114, *Time*, October 14, 1966).

So some of your friends have "turned on" with suicide, and there isn't much we can discuss with them. Others, possibly yourself, continue to search for reality by "turning on" with alcohol, sex, and drugs. It's that damnable "frustration with reality," isn't it?

But the problem with this attempt to find or experience reality is that when you "turn on" in these ways—you "tune out" some other things that I'm convinced are absolutely essential to one's well-being. You "tune out" on life as God designed it. He made us! There are more reasons to believe that than we've got time to discuss today. The Bible says, "He has created every race of men to live over the face of the whole earth. He has determined the times of their existence and the limits of their habitation, so that they might search for God, in the hope that they might feel for him and find him,—yes, even though he is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:26-28, Phillips). He is the God who has prepared unimaginable things, "which eyes saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man," for those that decide to love and honor Him in this life (I Corinthians 2:9).

When you "turn on" in the ways we have discussed, you also "tune out" on life as Jesus lived it and gives it to us today! The life He now gives is "abundant life," that is, a different kind of life and a better life than anything drugs or other pursuits can know (John 10:10). Christ lived the world's most unselfish life, and He says that His followers have to do likewise (Matthew 10:39). It's high time you as an intelligent, sensitive, aware student stopped allowing caricatures of Christianity to hinder your acceptance of Christ's demand, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39).

Christ's life which all Christians live today was purposeful life. He knew why He was alive! He fulfilled a fantastic plan, the likes of which no man has ever matched! And He says to you, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. . . For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life" (Matthew 16:24-26)? Sound like a "sell-out" to the establishment? Not on your life! He honored and obeyed His Father and our Father with a purposeful, unselfish, and abundant life of service to others. In fact, Jesus taught the revolutionary principle that

"whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 20:26-28). That's the real Jesus that I'm asking to accept today. But let's get it straight, it will take all you've got. He won't have you and can't use you until and unless you surrender completely to His use of your life. I can't forget an answer given by a college student to the question, "Why did you join VISTA?" The answer, you guessed it, "In order to be useful." And that's what Jesus will do with your life when you surrender to Him.

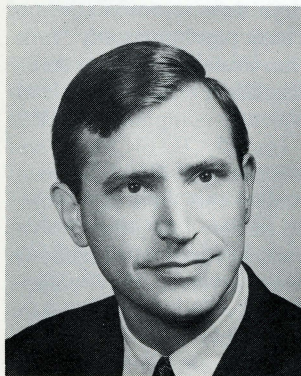
But the students who "turn on" with sex, alcohol, and drugs also "tune out" the life revolutionized by the "Gospel." When Jesus talked with one seeker for truth He urged him to experience "a second birth." That "new birth," Jesus explained, is the result of total faith in Him as the Christ, all-out repentance and repudiation of one's sins, and union with Christ in baptism—the birth of "water and Spirit," as Jesus described it (John 3:3-5). For the individual who comes to know and be united with Christ, Paul says, becomes "a new man." That's what most of us desperately need now—another beginning, a new life, to become a new man. That happens in Christ! And how simple but necessary it is to form a living relationship with Jesus. "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26, 27).

But there's another matter that we have to get clear. The "turned on" students have also "tuned out" the morally purposeful life of the Christian. In the loss of human dignity and purpose in all kinds of immorality, many college students are today living in their own selfishly designed hell! But there is another way—God's way. The way that honors God and respects human dignity with moral purpose and Christian conduct. In a day when sexual license and other kinds of immorality are winked at, the Christian lives by this truth: "Flee fornication. . . . Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Corinthians 6:18-20).

You've been given a life, regardless of what or who you think is responsible for that fact. But the fact remains that you have man's most important possession — life. I believe that God gives us this life (Acts 17:24, 25). By that I mean He is the central truth around which your life can be meaningfully integrated. Paul stated man's folly, the folly of the ages, in his *Letter to the Romans*: "Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither

gave thanks, but became vain in their reasonings and their senseless heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). Everything goes wrong when man's relationship with God is destroyed by sin.

Man, confused and discouraged by sin, can come to Jesus, and thus to the life and purpose that God gives! He accepts all kinds of men and women, regardless of past sins, who will surrender to Him on His terms. The words of that victorious conqueror of life and death challenge each of us this very hour: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). May I suggest that you "turn off" your self-destroying addictions and that you "tune in" on the happy, meaningful life that Jesus Christ gives.



John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.