

What Does Youth Need?

By Everett Hardin

The times and seasons are worrisome. Ungodliness is the accepted norm or pattern of behavior. Righteousness is out of style and step with the world, so there is great concern for young people.

Today, great emphasis is being placed upon youth—and this is fine, providing it is kept within proper bounds. However, the matter of youth can be, and frequently is, over emphasized. This is something done to such extent that young people are made to feel “special” and must have “special treatment” by the church. They must be provided with entertainment, recreation, fun and frolic. The impression is left that they are not really a part of the church and need not be concerned with ordinary duties of other Christians.

Let us remember that God places much emphasis on old and calls upon youth for proper honor and respect toward those who are older. We will do well to continue to put the emphasis where God placed it. While we do this we will also do well to remember that the Bible has much to say about young people. The Bible championed the cause of youth in a world which gave little concern to them. God’s people were instructed regarding the proper treatment, teaching and training of their children. The Bible upholds concern for youth.

Youth Does Not Need

1. A Teen Center Styled Church: The church is a “*spiritual house*,” I Pet. 2:5. Its works are assigned by its head and revealed in His word. God “*put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church*,” Eph. 1:22. When Christ ascended upon high “*he gave some apostles, and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers*,” Eph. 4:11-12. There is not a line, jot or tittle which authorizes the church to function as a glorified recreation center. We must preach the truth about the divine nature, character, and identity of the Lord’s spiritual house. When elders and preachers are looked upon as “chaperones” and “church committees” are planning skating parties and hay rides they are doing so without authority from the word of God. Think and say what you will, it is the truth, and no amount of scorn can deny it.

2. A Youth Director: Youth directors are church officers. How do I know? Because a number of churches have them, but we never read about the office, or officer, or work in the New Testament. What are the scriptural qualifications and duties of Youth Director? Will someone give Scripture for one or cite the New Testament churches that had one. It cannot be done. When brethren add unscriptural works, they must invent unscriptural officers to run them. Did anyone say that churches of Christ “do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names?” Try applying this principle the next time a Youth Director is ordained, or quote it around the camp fire at a Youth Rally. Somehow, the claim just doesn’t fit the practice.

Youth Needs

1. Churches That Specialize in Being New Testament Churches. This means elders who constantly feed the flock the word of God, I Pet. 5:2. This means godly, pious teachers who resolutely instruct in the pattern of sound words. Paul instructed Timothy, “*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*,” 2 Tim. 1:13. This means speaking, and rebuking with all authority in the ways of right and proper behavior, Tit. 2:15.

The elders are the overseers of the flock, leading, supervising and guiding. They have the duty not only to feed, but to do what is necessary in caring for the flock. Elders have no authority to provide quilting materials or checkers for the aged and none to supply badminton or basketball for the young. They are to “*watch for souls,*” Heb. 13:17, not softballs. That is God’s plan. It may not suit or fit the ideas of some brethren, but it is the truth nevertheless.

New Testament preachers were just that — New Testament preachers. They were not socially minded camp directors, but they were spiritually minded preachers of the word. Paul gave instructions that would save Timothy and those who heard him. “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee,*” I Tim. 4:16. Timothy was left at Ephesus that he might charge some “*that they teach no other doctrine,*” I Tim. 1:3.

2. Christians That Specialize in Being New Testament Christians: When young people see their parents and other adult Christians engaging in immodesty and general habits of the world, they learn that being a Christian is not a sincere undertaking. No wonder young people are “turned off” and “tuned out!” They see through the hypocrisy of it all and some refuse to “relate” or respond to “the church.” Then the parents exclaim, “where did we go wrong?” Where did they go right? Their training was not what it should have been.

3. Youth Needs to Seek God In Youth: We may think that the young deserve to have their fling with life and settle down to spiritual things later. Solomon teaches just the opposite. In fact, age may work against us in our struggle to shun the world and obey God. When we look back on a life misspent, what a sad, empty gaze it will be. Young people should begin their seeking after God in the days of youth — to prepare themselves against the evil days and the temptations sure to come, Eccl. 12:1.

In the days of youth decisions are made which affect one for the remainder of his life, and even for eternity. So much depends upon decisions made concerning marriage. It is in youth that one usually chooses a companion. A young man needs to remember that he is not only choosing a wife but also the mother of his children, who will have tremendous effect in shaping their lives and destinies. A young woman not only chooses a husband but also the father of her children. In youth, habits are formed, whether good or bad, and will be difficult to change in later years.

During these years one begins to choose the kind of people with whom he associates, and will find it difficult to change if he runs with the wrong crowd. Attitudes developed in youth often prevail throughout life; whether one respects and obeys rightful authority, or not; whether he learns to work and be diligent, or is lazy and slothful; whether one is truthful and forthright or sneaking and deceitful; whether one is open and honest, or given to trickery and dishonesty; whether one cultivates the traits of dependability or of undependability; these and many other attitudes developed in youth will often prevail throughout life, and determine the destiny of one’s soul. How every important it is, then, that one begin to seek God while he is young.

4. Sin Must Be Accounted For. Notice how Ecclesiastes 12 begins, and ends. “*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...*” and ends by saying, “*For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*” Judgment is sure, Heb. 9:27. One must account for the deeds done in the body, 2 Cor. 5:10. Even the forgiveness of sins does not release one from the physical consequences of them, Eccl. 11:9.

Youth is often the time when temptations are stronger. In youth one is more apt to be wrong more often, than any other time. David wished the sins of his youth not to be remembered, Psa. 25:7. Job reproved his friends because they charged him with iniquities characteristic of

youth, Job 13:26. Yes, young people need to seek God — to avoid the pitfalls of youth. They are urged to enjoy the days of their youth, but remember that God will bring all things into judgment.

We urge older people who have not done so to bring their lives into conformity to the revealed will of God. While it is true that older people can neither go back to their youth nor undo the mistakes of the past, forgiveness of sins is made possible to all by the blood of Christ, Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5, and you will never be any younger and it will never be any easier to obey Him. The gospel is God's power to save and Christ is "*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him,*" Rom. 1:16; Heb. 5:9. Hence, we urge all accountable people, whether young or old, to learn what God teaches in His word, believe what He says, obey what He commands, and live and serve as His word directs and trust Him for the fulfillment of His promises. To do so will bring the greatest possible happiness in this life, enable one to have an influence for good on others, and prepare one for an eternal home with God.
