

The Challenge of Young Adults

By Kent Heaton

Graduation from High School is an exciting time for young people. With great anticipation they look forward to a new dawn of opportunities taking them to new places and meeting new friends. Plans are made to move away to college or pursue jobs in many fields of interest. Some join the military while others marry and find a settled job that satisfies the needs of a family. So many decisions await the young mind that at times it seems to overwhelm the imagination.

The transition from high school is an awkward time as the excitement of leaving home meets the face of reality. Independence is much desired but comes at a cost few realize until thrown into the midst of responsibility. The accountability of a free spirit still requires paying the bills and feeding the body. There are myriads of temptations that lay on the threshold of a young man's life that can destroy a good character. Decisions made now will impact the rest of one's life. This period of 'wilderness wandering' is fraught with many dangers that if not kept in check will bring misery and heartache to the lives of the young adult.

From the beginning of time the Creator of man has shown the creation how to make the right decisions. The young person must recognize that he is made in the image of God and that happiness and completeness in life can only be found by seeking the wisdom of God. Six lessons will help all young people know their place in life and guide them to a long and fruitful life.

1) THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES IN LIFE. One of the lessons learned in science is that for every action there is a reaction. The apostle Paul reminds us of the consequences of our actions - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:7-8). The fun you have today will bring a harvest tomorrow. Sowing wild oats in youth will bring a future marred by regret and sorrow.

Wisdom for youth knows that while the heart should be filled with the joys of this time in life, "God will bring you into judgment" (Ecc. 11:9). There will be a day of reckoning as in all things in life. Fill your days of youth with the good things you can take with you tomorrow. The treasures of today will be a lot more enjoyable in the years to come than trying to live down the mistakes of the past.

Be careful with the decisions you make in regard to your career (Matt. 6:33), your friends (1Cor. 15:33), the one you marry (1Peter 3:7) and your faith (Acts 16:2). You stand at the headwaters of your life to decide the course your life will take. Make certain your decisions are guided by the hand of the Creator.

2) LIFE IS ONLY ONE TRIP; THERE ARE NO DO-OVERS. In golf you may be allowed a mulligan but life offers no such reward. A mulligan allows you take to take the shot over again but playing golf does not imitate life. Every day is imprinted on the pages of history and cannot be changed. We are victims of our past, prisoners of the present and judges of the future. What we do today cannot be done over; we can only seek to make better decisions today.

The challenge of life is not to live without regrets but rather to live life with a few regrets as possible. King David was a man after God's own heart but he lived with regret. Showing the consequence of sin the Lord through the hand of Matthew reminds everyone of the sin David committed with Bathsheba in Matthew 1:6. There can be no doubt David wanted a 'mulligan' in life to change his fateful decision but he had to live with the decision he made. He remained faithful to the Lord and overcame his sin but the memory of it remained.

"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). The decisions you make today will set a course of decisions tomorrow. Some things you can change but some things you cannot change. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). The wisdom literature in the Old Testament is especially valuable for young people to read and learn valuable life lessons from.

3) LIFE IS NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART. The days after high school seem to be framed with golden days of frolic and frivolity. So often young people leave the embrace of home and run headlong into the embrace of a cruel world that cares nothing for them. The young man of Jesus' parable in Luke 15 found that out the hard way. He wanted freedom and he got freedom for a while until he found himself feeding swine and wishing he could eat their slop. The freedom of choice in youth does not take away the penalty of tomorrow's payment that will come due. There are many dangers waiting to consume the young heart and bring a life of regret.

The crafty woman of Proverbs 7 is all too often the life story of many a young person. Enticing speech and flattering lips lead many hearts to drown in sorrow. The dangers of pornography, sexual promiscuity, challenges to faith in God, ridicule of religion in general, rejection of parental advice and an appeal to making it rich no matter the cost stand at the threshold of a young person's life. Without a resolve to withstand the harsh world by the determined faith in God a young man or woman will find themselves in many troubles. "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2Tim. 2:22).

4) FAITHFULNESS TO GOD BEGINS WITH YOU! The faith of your parents and grandparents is a very important part of your life. Examples of godly people that you may have known growing up help mold your life in many ways. Friends will encourage you to be a good person as you spend time with them. But when you leave home and enter a world given over to unbelief your faith must come from a heart developed by your own love of truth. Your parent's faith will not save you because of your last name. Satan will be defeated because your faith is what you have made your own.

When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers (Gen. 37) the faith he had in the Lord God came from his trust in God's love. He did not have anyone to lean upon but the belief that God would provide for him. David stood in the valley of Elah facing Goliath without the army of Israel, neither the blessing of his brothers nor the advice of his father. He stood alone. Yet in faith he gained the victory. Daniel and his three friends faced an onslaught of faith challenges in Babylon without the support group they may have had in Jerusalem. Young man Timothy made his faith his own. "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1Tim. 4:12).

5) YOU ARE AN ETERNAL BEING. The previous four points are dependent upon knowing the decisions you make will have consequences not only in this life but also after death. Understanding you are an eternal being is to say that you know you will never cease to exist. Death may seem like a far off mystery to you but learning early not to fear death and to see it as a bridge from mortality to immortality will help in making the right decisions. The book of Ecclesiastes is written for the young man and young woman to consider the questions of life. When all is said and done – what is life all about? Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecc. 12:13-14). You see, you are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and although your body will die you will not. Life is short but on this short span of time eternity will be determined.

6) BUILDING A GODLY LIFE IS A LIFE OF JOY. "Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1Tim. 4:8). Living a life for God will temper the impact of sin upon your life. This does not suggest that bad things cannot happen to young people. Disease, death, sorrow and the challenges of life are for all ages. But living a godly life will bring a greater amount of joy to life than sowing wild oats today and praying for a crop failure tomorrow. Being a godly man and woman will bring greater fulfillment in life with wisdom from above. "I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word" (Psalm 119:102).

The wisdom of man will only bring despair. Finding the wisdom of God will bring clarity and understanding for life. Listen to the older folk who tell you of the regrets made in life when they did not follow a path of godliness. The right answers are found in God's word. Happiness in life is built upon a faith in the way of the Lord. Living for the Lord is a life not to be regretted. May God bless your hearts and minds to serve him each day and find the joy of living in Jesus Christ.