

Friday - 10/25/96
Conyers, GA

Serving God While Young

Intro: My recent 20 year high school reunion. I remember clearly ...

1. The Awkwardness/Frustration of Being Young

A. A time of stress:

1. Exposure to evil - **Illus:** Hueytown teens: Our parents don't understand how bad it really is at school (drugs, drinking, violence, sexual activity, etc.). This leads to breakdown of communication, distrust, **loneliness**.
2. Struggle between knowing and wanting to do what is right and paying the price of social ostracism and ridicule. **Illus:** A Christian's daughter - "I don't want to be known as a goody two-shoes."

B. A time of transition:

1. Beginning to think for yourself, draw own conclusions. This is good, but it often conflicts with parents' judgment and responsibility to provide safe, wholesome, spiritually strong environment.
2. Responsibility: Knowing what you need to do but being afraid to take on the responsibility. **Illus:** Hard for the butterfly to break out of shell.

C. A time when some parents push their children into *fleshly* maturity without *spiritual* foundation - job, car, sports, beeper, etc.

2. The Value of Young People to God

A. Joseph -

1. Visions of future greatness at 17 (Gn 37:2).
2. Rejected by family; in/out of prison (unjustly) in twenties. Yet able to flee fornication - Gn 39:7-12.
3. Prime minister over Egypt at 30 (Gn 41:46).

B. David -

1. Anointed as next king at young age - so young his father didn't take his consideration seriously. 1 Sam 16:7 - "*but the Lord looks at the heart.*" What did He see in David? Ac 13:22 - "*a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.*"

2. Yet David spent next years going from pinnacle of popularity and success to being a renegade; suffered break-up of marriage; saw friends die and other killed for their loyalty to him.

3. King at 30 - 2 Sam 5:4.

C. There are things that *only* **you** can do! God needs you to do it!

3. The Challenge of Idolatry

A. A last-ditch effort at saving Judah. Manasseh had sent the nation over the final precipice - 2 Chr 33:2-9. God raises up two men to give Judah one last chance:

1. Jeremiah - Jer 1:6-7, 17-19.

2. Josiah - 2 Chr 34:1-3 (begins reform), 14-15, 19 (find Law), 26-27 (God commends Josiah's attitude).

3. The result of Jeremiah/Josiah's work: the nation collapses anyway. **Warning:** You will not change the world, and you cannot change men's hearts. All you can do is **do** what is right and **exhort** others to do the same.

B. The courage of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego - Dan 3:16-18.

1. **Danger:** We may be so preoccupied with softening opposition that we hide our light or water down our commitment so as not to appear "extreme" or "out of step" with others. We can moderate ourselves to the point that we stand for *nothing* and lose our distinctiveness.

2. Sometimes there are *unavoidable* consequences in honoring our commitment. What will we do in such a confrontation?

C. Reflections:

1. You can make a difference! Don't limit yourself by fear.

2. If you're old enough to wish for independent decision-making, you are old enough to be judged for the decisions you make - Ecc 11:9 - *"Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment."*

3. Set spiritual goals along with your educational, vocational and financial goals.

4. Adults: Give the young a chance; don't constantly criticize; **listen** to them.