

When God Speaks to Youth...

Intro: The word of God is for everybody; but sometimes God speaks to specific target audiences in His word. There are several times in Scripture where God has said some things directly to young people that they need to know. Today my lesson is directed to the younger members of our audience; but all of us could benefit by thinking about what God says to youth.

"When God Speaks to Youth..."

He speaks about the proper approach to life

No book speaks more practically about how to live "life under the sun" than Ecclesiastes. The writer especially wanted to give advice to the young about the proper approach to life.

Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. So, remove vexation from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting. Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"; (Eccl. 11:9-12:1)

Rejoice and let your heart be pleasant.

Young people may be surprised to know that God actually wants them to be happy. God wants that for you all your life.

I've often found some young people to be constantly brooding about something. That's not the way God intended for them to live their life. If you are not a happy person on an on-going basis, it indicates that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way you approach life.

Follow the impulses of your heart & the desire of your eyes.

God urges young people to get what they want out of life. He wants them to attain to their goals, to fulfill the needs of their life. He wants them to enjoy the pleasures that they see.

Young people should be given an opportunity to pursue their dreams, unless of course those things are wrong or they create unreasonable burdens on their families.

Hopefully you know what you want out of life and are in pursuit of it. If not, you need to discuss what it is with your parents and look for a solution.

Remove vexation from your heart & pain from your body.

The "preacher" wisely saw that there was pain of two types in this world--hurt on the inside, hurt on the outside.

Hurt on the inside includes things like guilt, shame, fear, loneliness, worry, pressure, sadness, sorrow. They are often the

result of sin, of personal wrong-doing, or mistreatment by others.

Hurt on the outside include physical pain from abuse of the body or the consequences of dangerous actions. These are often the result of engaging in risky behaviors and experiencing the consequences of them.

There are some hurts in life we may not avoid because of life's circumstances, but we should surely want to avoid anything that would cause deliberate pain to ourselves or others.

If you are hurting, something is wrong. You need to look for help.

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

To remember the Creator is to acknowledge His role in making you who you are and honoring Him as the Creator. It means respecting His word and purpose for your life.

Why does God want you do these things? A part of the reason for this is the fact that a day is coming when your life might be filled with a lot of these things just because you are old. Life will have lots to cry about, loneliness, worry, fear. Pain may become an everyday thing due to sickness or the deteriorating health of old age.

Underlying the command is the belief that honoring God will bring blessing and prosperity at a time when we can truly enjoy it!

He speaks about listening to godly parents

My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life... (Prov. 6:20-23)

It was Harold Comer who first made me aware that the most frequent commandment in the Scripture is "listen." This is one of many times when the wise man of Proverbs urges his "son" to listen to him and to his wise counsel. The text presumes that he is a godly man with the experience of righteous character and living; and thus he can be a source of wisdom to youth. What he promises is that a young person who listens to his godly parents will find his way through life illumined with wisdom. He will avoid the pitfalls of darkness.

And refuse to listen to false teachers whether in religious robes or those "entertainers" who advocate ungodly values. Indeed as Paul said to the Corinthians:

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." (1 Cor. 15:33)

He speaks about the dangers of bad companions

My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause; Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down to the pit;

We shall find all kinds of precious wealth, We shall fill our houses with spoil; Throw in your lot with us, we shall all have one purse,"My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, for their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed blood. Indeed, it is useless to spread the net in the eyes of any bird; but they lie in wait for their own blood; They ambush their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; It takes away the life of its possessors. (Prov. 1:10-19)

The wise man knew the great dangers of falling in with the wrong crowd. He understood their appeal--to be accepted in the group, to share their success. Yet he also knew that such people were destined to experience the violence they planned to bring on others. They were setting a snare for their own capture and destruction. How often do we see the modern gang member experiencing the violence he planned to perpetrate on others?

Likewise he urged him to avoid the temptations of the immoral woman. He graphically and accurately portrays her clever appeals. But in the end he shows that such a young person is destined for real and serious trouble: *Suddenly he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; As a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life."* (Prov. 7:22-23)

Many a young person has suffered the hardship and suffering of being immoral in youth.

He speaks about the importance of a total spiritual commitment to Jesus

Let's turn now to the NT to the gospels and consider the words of Jesus to a young man who came to him, the rich young ruler. He came apparently seeking to use his wealth to do some good thing to inherit the kingdom of God. But unfortunately he was mistaken about the nature of the commitment that following Jesus required. He could only be made to see that by the most challenging command:

And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (Mk. 10:21)

What Jesus required is not a prerequisite to all who would be disciples; yet in this young man's case, it was necessary to make him see what a grip his material wealth had upon him and to free him from the lingering slavery to his possessions. What Jesus wanted the young man to see was that becoming his follower was a lifelong and total commitment. It was not a matter of doing some momentary good deed, no matter how great, but rather it was a matter of surrendering everything to Jesus--money, time, even life itself.

So, every young person also needs to hear this word of God to youth.

Becoming a follower of Jesus is the most important thing you'll ever do; but when you take that step recognize the nature of God's call. It is not a superficial commitment. It is not a call to do a good deed or make a short-term commitment. He wants all of you! He wants all of you for life!

Yet when God speaks to youth about commitment, he also speaks of His
commitment to them--to forgive you of your sins, to help you through life, to
save you forever in heaven!

Conclusion: Young people are free to choose the life they want to live.

You don't have to do what anyone else wants you to do.

You can take charge of your own life and live it as you please.

You are responsible for the consequences of the choices you make.

Listen to God and make the right choice.