

#76 “God Uses Young People”

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Solomon shares part of his reason in writing the Proverbs in Proverbs 1:4, saying, “To give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion.” Too often young people are given a free pass when it comes to expecting much from them. Solomon didn’t take this view, however. He believed that they were able to be taught and trained in God’s Word such that they could learn wisdom, prudence, knowledge, and discretion. These are marks of spiritual maturity and having walked with God over time. These are characteristics even many who are older physically and older in Christ even fail to possess. Solomon’s point is not to underestimate the youth, for they are capable of having great wisdom and understanding, or at the very least, being pushed and led in that direction. It is not Biblical for young people to be relegated as rebellious, a nuisance, and uninterested in the things of God. It is not acceptable to simply entertain them and tickle their ears, doing just enough to make church a social hour to keep them out of trouble for a short time. Solomon sets a higher standard, and so should we. Our youth will be the leaders of our next generation, and how wonderful it would be to teach them prudence and discretion early on.

Joshua was the servant of Moses from his youth, and we know that Joshua came to be a great and godly leader (Numbers 11:28). Josiah inherited the kingdom of Judah at a mere eight years of age (2 Kings 22:1). When he was sixteen, he sought God and began to reform the nation (2 Chronicles 34:3-7). How about David? He was but a youth when he challenged the giant Goliath and stood for Jehovah against an entire pagan nation and before his own nation’s frightened king and army. In 1 Samuel 17:33, we read the words of the king of Israel to David: “Then Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; *for you are but a youth* while he has been a warrior from his youth’” (emphasis added). Indeed, the attitude that young people are “not able” was around even back then. Saul ignored David, Samuel (a righteous man of God) didn’t expect God to choose him to be king (1 Samuel 16:1-12), and Goliath ridiculed him. 1 Samuel 17:44 says, “When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; *for he was but a youth*, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance” (emphasis added). Yet we know how the story unfolded. God worked through this young man’s faith and courage as he fought for Jehovah and not for himself such that he slew Goliath and started to win the favor of the people. He would eventually take over as king in God’s timing. What a powerful and vivid lesson as to the relevance and value of serving God in our youth! Had David not stood up against Goliath, much would be different in Israel’s history. But he, a mere lad, took on the challenge before him because he believed that God had a purpose for him. He couldn’t figure out why the rest of the grown men of the nation balked and cowered in fear. This was shameful to God, and David would have none of it. So he stepped up to the plate and did what the grownups were failing to do.

We must be willing to encourage our young people to search through the Scriptures and

to be a taught the full counsel of God. We cannot bail out and think that they are not ready to study the Bible or too young for it to apply. The Bible is always relevant and powerful. Then, it is up to our young people to receive its message and step out in faith. Nobody pushed David into fighting Goliath. He did it because he feared God. Thus, those who want to grow must find a way to separate themselves from the surrounding nonsense, laziness, indifference, and rebellion and get into the Word and grow. It will take courage, and it may well be a lonely road. But it is right and worth it.

Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, saying, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” The assumption was that people wouldn’t respect Timothy because he was relatively young despite his knowledge of Scripture and ability to shepherd the flock. Paul understood that people judge not based upon wisdom but upon outward appearance. His admonition to Timothy was simply not to bend to the ridicule of others but to fulfill his calling by living out a godly life before them. All he could do was be a godly example of wisdom and discretion and pray that God would show people that age is not the limiting factor whereas faith is.

So the message to our youth is clear: *be and do what God expects you to be and do, even if no one else expects it from you and even if no one else is leading you in the right direction.* Take courage, be strong in the Lord, and study His Word. Be an example of a young person who knows God’s Word and who possesses sound judgment in his or her decision making. It is possible and desirable. May we as adults do our part to encourage this development, growth, and service for the kingdom, and may God raise up young people who are willing to do His work.