

The Days of Our Youth

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** All human beings need proper training; proper training often includes warnings:
 - A. Training from our parents:
 - (1) Don't touch a hot stove.
 - (2) Don't use a hair dryer in the bathtub.
 - (3) Wear a coat and hat in winter weather.
 - (4) Don't play in the street.
 - (5) Be kind, courteous and respectful of others.
 - (6) Brush your teeth, clean your room.
 - B. Training from society:
 - (1) Respect the rights of others.
 - (2) Respect the laws of the government.
 - (3) Pay your debts and taxes.
2. All of us need training from the word of God: **Eph. 6:4**: *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*
 - A. ****** *"training"*: education whose aim is to increase one's virtue (i.e., moral excellence).
 - B. ****** *"admonition"*: education or training with the aim of disciplinary correction.
3. The Word of God gives admonitions to those of all ages, young and old:
 - A. Older men: **Titus 2:2**: *"that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience;"*
 - B. Older women: **Titus 2:3-4**: *"the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things — 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,"*
 - C. Young women: **Titus 2:4-5**: *"that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.";* **I Tim. 5:14**: *"Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully."*
 - D. Young men: **Titus 2:6-8a**: *"Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, 7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned..."*
 - E. Youth: **2 Tim 2:22**: *"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.";* **I Tim. 4:12**: *"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."*
4. ****** I think this shows we all need more emphasis on certain things at different stages of our lives.
 - A. God's Word does not single out any age group and give it emphasis above another age group but gives equal emphasis to the needs of all.
 - B. **3** Today I want to focus our attention upon our young people, even though all of us can learn and benefit from the Scripture's admonitions directed at our youth (8 points).

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **4 Always put God first:** Always put the Lord's church, your spiritual life and values first in your life!
 - A. The Lord demands it! Matt. 6:33; 5:6; Lk. 9:23; **Mk. 12:29-30:** "Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment."
 - (1) You're not going to live forever! Jas. 4:14; Heb. 9:27
 - (2) You will face the Lord in judgment and give an account for your life! **Rom. 14:12:** "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."; **2 Cor 5:9-10:** "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
 - (3) Follow Solomon's advice and admonition! **Eccl. 12:13-14:** "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (KJV)
 - B. You are responsible for your own salvation! Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:12
 - (1) Only those "in Christ" will be saved! Acts 2:47; 2 Tim. 2:10; Eph. 5:23; 4:4; 1:22-23
 - (2) Satan will try to his best to draw you away from Christ's body: Eph. 2:16; Acts 20:28
 - (3) Satan will allure you: "there are saved people in all churches": Acts 4:12; Eph. 5:23; 4:4
 - C. Only worship and work with a congregation that follows the truth of God's Word! Col. 3:17; **Matt. 15:13-14:** "But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.'"
 - D. Seek your own salvation first, but don't forget the salvation of others: **Prov. 11:30:** "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise."; Matt. 16:26
 - E. God must be first in our lives, or not at all: Matt. 6:24; 12:30
2. **** Respect and obey your parents:**
 - A. Paul said, "children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right" (Eph. 6:1-3; Acts 5:29).
 - (1) It is a sin to be disobedient to parents: Rom. 1:30; **2 Tim. 3:1-2:** "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents..."
 - (2) The 5th of the 10 commandments in the Law of Moses: **Ex. 20:12:** "honor thy father and thy mother..."
 - (3) Under the Law of Moses, a stubborn/rebellious son was to be stoned (Deut. 21:18-21).
 - B. How long?
 - (1) As long as your mother and father are your mother and father!
 - (2) When our mothers and fathers grow old we are to show them our respect by caring for them and loving them (Matt. 15:3-6; **1 Tim. 5:4:** "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.").

3. **** Watch your attitude:**

A. Beware of the sins of the disposition; the sins of:

- ☛ Pride
- ☛ Envy
- ☛ Covetousness
- ☛ Malice
- ☛ Selfishness
- ☛ Hatred
- ☛ Tongue (e.g., evil speaking)

B. These are a constant threat to our spiritual and physical welfare.

C. Paul warns about the sins of disposition: **Gal. 5:19-21**: “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revellies, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Eph. 4:31-32: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Heb. 12:15: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”

Prov. 16:18-19: “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. 19 Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”

D. These sins will cause you to lose your soul & make you a miserable person to be around.

(1) Many people today are physically sick because of the sins of disposition (depression, fatigue, physical illnesses).

(2) The fruit of the Spirit will keep one spiritually and physically healthy!

Gal. 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Prov. 17:22: “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

E. Adopt the attitude and mindset of Christ (Phil. 2:5-8).

(1) Put the needs of others first, before yours (**Phil. 2:3-4**: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”).

(2) When others see you coming let them say: “Great, here comes _____.”
Rather than “Oh, no! Quick, hide, here comes _____.”

4. **** Flee youthful lusts:**

A. Being young and youthful is a wonderful thing! Health, vigor, strength, etc.

(1) However, being youthful is also a time of great spiritual danger!

(2) Paul speaks of “youthful lusts”: **2 Tim. 2:22**: “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

B. Satan is working day and night to lead us into temptation and sin: 1 Pet. 5:8

C. What might be included in “youthful lusts”?

(1) Many things, but most certainly: drunkenness, fornication, and lasciviousness (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

(2) These sins will not only cause us to lose our souls, they also can easily destroy our happiness, prosperity and health here in this life.

- ☛ **Alcohol: Prov 23:31-32:** “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.”
 - Alcohol poisoning (some young people have died from it!)
 - Alcoholism
 - DUI
 - Lost \$\$, lost jobs, lost families, lost reputation, etc.
- ☛ **Fornication: I Cor. 6:18:** “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”; **I Thess. 4:3-5:** “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God”; Matt. 5:28
 - Unwanted pregnancy
 - STD’s
 - Ruined relationships, ruined marriages, ruined reputations
- ☛ **Lasciviousness: Eph. 4:19-20:** “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But ye have not so learned Christ;” (KJV); Gal. 5:19-21
 - Definition: lasciviousness: synonyms are indecency, shamelessness
 - Sexually suggestive clothing, behavior, thoughts
 - Crude vulgar, sexually suggestive language, movies, TV, entertainment, etc.
 - Dancing, petting (i.e., “making out”), night clubbing, mixed swimming, etc.

D. Follow Paul’s simple, but profound advice to Timothy; you’ll never regret it! **I Tim. 5:22:** “keep yourself pure”

5. **5** Choose your companions carefully:

A. We are influenced by others (despite claims to the contrary!):

I Cor. 15:33: “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” (NIV)

“He that lieth down with dogs shall rise up with fleas.” —Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanack

B. Choose your friends/companions VERY carefully:

(1) Is this person honest? Are they trustworthy?

(2) Will they help me be more, or less, faithful to God?

Prov. 13:20: “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.”

Prov. 22:24-25: “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, 25 lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.”

Psa. 119:115: “Depart from me, you evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God!”

C. Choose your mate VERY carefully:

- (1) The two most important decisions you will ever make in life are:
 - (a) Will I become a Christian?
 - (b) Who will I marry?
- (2) Remember that marriage is a lifetime commitment! Matt. 19:9
 - (a) Your salvation and relationship with God is the most important thing in your life.
 - (b) It would be better to go through life without a husband/wife than to have a husband/wife that causes you to become unfaithful to God (**Matt. 19:10**: “His disciples said to Him, ‘If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.’”).
 - (c) Christians must permit nothing to turn them away from God (**1 Kgs. 11:3-7**: “...his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. ...6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David...”).
 - (d) You need all the help you can get in living the life of a Christian.
 - (e) To do this, you should seek a person with similar spiritual goals and ideals to team up with for life; no person will have as much influence on you as your husband or wife.
 - (f) Don’t choose a husband/wife simply because they’ve been “baptized”; choose one who is truly committed to Christ! Eph. 5:25
 - (g) A preacher for a church in Oklahoma compiled information for over a 20-year period he worked with that church --the figures are for marriages within that church during that period of time:
 - ☛ Christians married to non-Christians: 79 total; 57 left the church (72%); only 22 remained faithful; 14 converted their mates; 26 divorced.
 - ☛ Christians who married Christians: 64 total; only 5 left the church (<8%); 59 remained faithful; only 2 divorced.

D. Choose wisely! Your happiness is at stake! Your eternal destiny is at stake!

6. ****** Choose your career carefully:

A. The career you select will have a huge impact on your life:

- (1) It will go a long way in whether or not you live a satisfying life: “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” —unknown
- (2) It will influence your finances and family life.
- (3) It will certainly influence your relationship with God.
- (4) Select a career that allows you to use your talents to the fullest in the service of God.
- (5) Many young people carelessly drift into occupations where they are not free to do much in the work of the church.
- (6) Select a “portable” career: i.e., a career where its relatively easy to find a job just about anywhere.
- (7) A “portable” career will help you when it comes time to find a faithful congregation with which to work and worship (Heb. 10:24-25).
 - (a) Faithful congregations are increasingly rare!

- (b) It is very, very hard to remain faithful without a faithful congregation with which you can associate.
- (c) Starting a congregation from “scratch” is extremely difficult! It’s not impossible, but don’t think that it’s easy! It’s also very difficult to “turn around” a liberal group!
- (8) Be the employee your employer wishes he/she had more of! Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 6:7
- B. Prayerfully consider the career you choose **and** any specific job you take.
 - (1) Is this choice going to help me be a better Christian?
 - (2) Select the job which gives you the greatest opportunity to develop as a Christian.

7. **** Be a good steward:**

- A. We need to be good stewards of our time and money.
- B. What do I mean by being a good steward?
 - (1) *Dictionary.com*: A steward is a person who manages another’s property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.”
 - (2) Make no mistake, you are owned by someone else! **I Cor. 6:19-20**: *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”*
 - (3) We are stewards of the many blessings God has given us: life, abilities, finances, etc., etc.
 - (4) We must be good stewards of His bountiful gifts! **I Cor. 4:2**: *“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”*
 - (5) If we fail our stewardship and terrible fate awaits us! **Matt. 25:26-30**: *“But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*
- C. Manage your finances wisely!
 - (1) Minimize debt: do without rather than get in debt! Material things don’t make you happy (**Eccl. 5:10**: *“He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.”*).
 - (2) Save: always save something.
 - (3) Give generously: I Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9; Mk. 12:42; I Jn. 3:17; Matt. 25:31-46
 - (4) You can't go to heaven with the attitude “Let the other fellow pay.”
- D. Manage your time wisely! Time is our most precious resource!
 - (1) Realize that your time belongs to God just as your money.
 - (2) Don't rob God of the time that belongs to Him (e.g., Heb. 10:24-25).
 - (3) Don't rob your family of the time that is due them!

- (4) Don't fritter away your time on useless and vain activities (Recreation is not wrong, but we can make it wrong!).

E. Develop your talents:

- (1) God has given each of us some "talents" (abilities).
- (2) Develop your "talents" to glorify God! Matt. 25:14-30
- (3) Don't sell yourself short! You are capable of much more than you might think or have been told by others (e.g., parents, teachers, employers, etc.).
- (4) Hard work beats talent any day of the week!
"Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work."

— Stephen King

- (5) Don't be like the one talent man; follow this person's advice:

"When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me.'"

— Erma Bombeck

8. **** Stay focused:**

A. Always keep your eyes on the goal of heaven and never let go! Never quit!

- (1) My good friend Ron Halbrook says, "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."
- (2) No pun intended, that's the "gospel truth"!
- (3) We won't get there if we don't prepare to go there!

B. Heaven is real! But we won't get there by accident!

- (1) Today, right now, Jesus is there preparing us a dwelling place there! Jn. 14:1-4; **Col. 3:1-4**: *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*

- (2) We must give diligent effort all the days of our lives (Jas. 4:14):

1 Pet. 1:3-5: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."*

2 Pet. 1:3-11: *"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, ...knowledge ...self-control ...perseverance ...godliness ...brotherly kindness ...love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and*

election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; I I for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- C. Eternity is a long, long time! There is nothing in this world worth losing one’s eternal soul!
Matt. 16:26

III. CONCLUSION: 6

1. Solomon gives all of us wonderful counsel and advice in Ecclesiastes 12:1-8.
2. Why does he give us that advice and counsel? **Eccl. 12:13-14:** *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”* (KJV)
3. I hope all who have heard this lesson, especially our young folks, will carefully consider and ponder in your hearts what I have said.
4. Your whole life is ahead of you; make it count!
5. Invitation

—Adapted from a sermon (*Admonition to Young People Who Are Christians*) by Donald Townsley.