

On Becoming an Independent, Responsible, Successful Adult

- I. If God gives grace, there comes a time for all to transition from childhood to adulthood.
 - A. The adult puts away childish ways. **1CO 13:11.**
 - B. This doesn't happen overnight nor is it pegged to a birthday. An 18-year old may or may not be ready for independence: it depends upon the level of maturity.
 - C. Youth needs to gradually develop mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually to prepare for being an independent, responsible, successful adult.
 - D. For various reasons (nature, cultural influences, poor training, rebellion, weakness, etc.), the mental, emotional and spiritual growth of a young person do not generally keep pace with the development of the body and its desires and needs.
 - E. Young people: if you expect to be treated as an independent adult, start thinking and acting with the responsibility and maturity that befits a responsible, mature adult. **PSA 144:12.**
 - F. Godly parents of adolescents strive to steer between the extremes of unrelenting tight-fisted control of a growing youth and prematurely granting full independence to a youth whose only maturing part is the body.
- II. Definitions.
 - A. youth: The fact or state of being young... 2. The time when one is young; the early part or period of life; more specifically, the period from puberty till the attainment of full growth, between childhood and adult age.
 - B. adolescence: The process or condition of growing up; the growing age of human beings; the period which extends from childhood to manhood or womanhood; youth; ordinarily considered as extending from 14 to 25 in males, and from 12 to 21 in females.
 - C. adult: *adj.* 1. a. Grown up, having reached the age of maturity... b. Of persons: characteristically mature in attitude, outlook, etc.
- III. Youth is a time of relative ignorance and immaturity which must be guided. **PRO 29:15; 2:17 c/w 1KI 1:6.**
 - A. Adolescence is a time of great potential and transition to adulthood and independence. If this time is misused, it brings judgment. **ECC 11:9.**
 - B. Instruction from Scripture, parents and pastor can, if heeded, save youth from a lifetime of regret over the sins of youth. **PSA 25:7.**
 1. Many are the lives that never fully recover physically, emotionally, mentally, financially or socially from the sinful things done in youth.
 2. Others have a way of bringing those things to your remembrance. **JOB 13:26; 20:11.**
 3. Worse yet, even though God may have forgiven the sins of one's youth, the memory of them is still there, sometimes indelibly impressed upon our minds. And what the mind can't delete, it replays to the conscience.
 4. Young people, you DON'T want to end up as one who cries **PRO 5:11-13.**
 - a. You don't want to be given premature independence like the prodigal son insisted upon. **LUK 15:11-16 c/w PRO 1:32.**
 - b. If you think you are ready for independence, sit down with your parents and do the math as to what it takes to survive in this culture.
 - c. Be realistic. This world (unless it is under the delusion of a welfare ethic) is not going to turn its wealth over to you, be your friend or treat you with respect if you lack a marketable skill, initiative or good character.

- IV. As noted above, the time of youth and burgeoning adolescence is one of a maturing of the body and of a heightened desire for independence.
- A. The maturing of the body requires no effort; it is virtually inevitable.
 - B. The maturing of the mind and the character are a different story.
 - C. Young people: do not assume that just because your body is looking more like an adult's body means that you are mature.
 - 1. True maturity is a condition built by proper character development and that requires learning, discipline of one's thinking, control of one's desires and spirit, patience, trustworthiness, sense of duty, and responsibility for the consequences of one's own decisions.
 - 2. Insistence on fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind is not indicative of a soul yearning for independence but rather judgment. **EPH 2:3.**
 - D. Parents need to keep character development of youth at the forefront, a difficult task if the parent is still immature.
 - 1. The parent who is more interested in making a buddy out of a youth than training the youth to have good character is doing the youth a disservice.
 - 2. Parents who try to live vicariously through their youth to satisfy their own warped view of fullness or compensate for their own insecurities are thinking of themselves more than their child.
 - E. Our culture is already awash with physically mature people who still think and act like children.
 - 1. We don't need to be adding to that problem; neither should we be conformed to that model. **ROM 12:1-2.**
 - 2. Though Solomon was an adult when he came to power, he knew that what he needed was wisdom. **1KI 3:7-9.**
 - 3. His son, Rehoboam, assumed that age and heritage were all that were needed to rule in Israel but his naivety and arrogance split the kingdom. **2CH 12:13-14; 13:7 c/w 1KI 12:12-20.**
 - F. Independence is not an unqualified right marked by a birthday or education level.
 - 1. Whereas parents do well to guide their children towards independence in due course, full independence granted unto youth who have not proven themselves worthy of it will most likely be their ruin, as with the prodigal son.
 - 2. Consider the second clause of **PRO 29:15.**
 - 3. Consider responsibility. Parents should mete out opportunities for independent action according to youth's ability and trustworthiness.
 - a. Putting confidence in anyone who has proven themselves unfaithful is pain for all involved. **PRO 25:19.**
 - b. One must be faithful in small things if he expects to be entrusted with greater things. **LUK 16:10; 19:17.**
 - 4. Independence is never the liberty to do wrong, nor even the liberty to do whatever one feels like doing (**GAL 5:13**). It is rather the privilege of thinking and acting responsibly in the presence or absence of oversight. **PHIL 2:12.**
 - a. A real test of character is not what one does when someone is watching but what one does when nobody else is around.
 - b. Another valid test of character is not the good that one is forced to do but the good that one does of his own choice.
 - (1) "The choices of life, not the compulsions, reveal character."
(A.W. Tozer)
 - (2) Doing good should be a willing, not grudging endeavor. **2CO 9:7.**

- V. Consider the Biblical concept of maturity.
- A. **LUK 2:52** describes the maturing of Jesus Christ. Maturity consists of more than physical development.
 - B. Wisdom is set forth as the highest level of human development; it is the standard of maturity. **PRO 4:7-13; 8:12-21.**
 1. principal: First or highest in rank or importance; that is at the head of all the rest; of the greatest account or value; foremost.
 2. Wisdom brings life to its fullest potential but if sinned against brings the opposite. **PRO 8:34-36.**
 - C. All wisdom is treasured up in the Lord Jesus Christ. **COL 2:3.**
 1. He is the absolute standard of all that it means to be mature. Conformity to Him IS maturity. **EPH 4:13-15.**
 2. There is no true maturity apart from being a Christian, striving continually to be more Christ-like in thinking and conduct.
 3. His selfless devotion to righteous principle earned Him exaltation and independent authority. **HEB 1:8-9; 1TI 6:14-15.**
 - D. The most mature decision a young person can make is to resolve to follow Christ.
- VI. Young people who desire more independence and liberty should be proving to their parents that they are striving to be wise and mature. A wise, mature person:
- A. is submissive to authority. **PRO 10:8; 28:7.**
 - B. admits when he is wrong and accepts correction. **PRO 9:8-9.**
 - C. is willing to learn. He doesn't think he knows it all already. **PRO 1:5.**
 - D. is thoughtful, cautious and foresightful rather than hasty and impulsive. **PRO 14:8, 15; 22:3; 4:26; 15:28.**
 - E. is industrious and frugal. **PRO 30:24-25; 21:17.**
 - F. understands his weaknesses and does not allow them to be exploited. **PRO 7:7; 17:18.**
 - G. controls his passions. **PRO 14:29.**
 - H. is generous to those in need. **PRO 3:27-28.**
 - I. fears God and departs from evil. **PRO 3:7.**
 - J. makes glad parents. **PRO 23:22-25.**
- VII. Caring parents of growing adolescents have a difficult task of deciding how much self-determination should be granted and at what age.
- A. Remember that the calendar age is subordinate to the level of character development.
 - B. Prematurely giving full power of self-determination to an adolescent who either has not proven themselves worthy of it or has not enough education or life experience to handle such power and responsibility is likely to duplicate the Prodigal Son's folly.
 - C. Making all the decisions for growing adolescents out of fear of them making a bad decision will likely provoke rebellion in time and is almost guaranteed to do so in someone who is at the distant end of adolescence.
 1. Parents should remember their own adolescence and natural desire for self-determination.
 2. If parents cannot trust virtual adults with any rights and liberties, what does that say about the parents' training program up to that point?
 3. Parents: be cautious to not mandate every choice they make as long as they live under your roof, for then they would never actually be making a choice. Remember: maturity is about learning to make wise choices. **PRO 2:10-11.**

4. Gauge the options available to them according to their level of maturity. Where an increasing reliability in making sound choices is seen, parents may increase the range of options within a sphere with which they are comfortable.

VIII. Parents make mistakes. However, young people:

- A. You are responsible to obey every good thing your parents taught you regardless of their imperfections. **MAT 23:1-3.**
- B. If you are smart enough to know your parents' mistakes and what they should have done or should be doing, then you are smart enough to realize your own mistakes and what you should do.
- C. You are not justified in ruining your own life because of the mistakes of others. You cannot perpetually blame your failures on your parents when you know better.
- D. Blaming a parent for one's own failure has been popular since Adam blamed God for his failure (**GEN 3:12**). You are only proving your rebellious Adamic nature by doing so.
- E. Israel tried to blame their troubles on their ancestors but God wasn't buying that. **EZE 18:1-4, 14-20.**
- F. Your parents will suffer for their wrongs. You will suffer for yours.
- G. It is a mark of immaturity to refuse to accept responsibility for your actions. **PRO 20:11; ECC 11:9-10; 12:13-14.**

IX. Young people: you are living in a very wicked time which has a perverse definition of liberty. You are in the midst of a culture which is at war with God and which does not have your best interests at heart. In fact, its great goal is to exploit you for its own selfish purposes under a guise of false liberty. **2PE 2:19.**

- A. Don't assume that the tech industry, fashion industry or the entertainment industry (movies, television, music, etc.) exists only for your good to improve you as a person and bring you to the fullness that Christ-likeness alone can do.
 1. These industries have one great love and it's not you. **1TI 6:10.**
 2. These industries know that lust sells because human nature desires it. **EPH 4:22.**
 3. The more they degrade you, the more lust they can sell you.
- B. God's children can survive in such a society and be true stars. **PHIL 2:14-15; MAT 5:14-16.**
- C. It is possible to *escape the corruption that is in the world through lust*. **2PE 1:4.**
 1. It is NOT by rebelling against godly parental oversight. **PRO 4:1-4 c/w 5:11-13.**
 2. It is NOT by saturating yourself with evil communications. **1CO 15:33.**
 3. It is NOT by companying with fools. **PRO 13:20.**
 4. It is NOT by going along with the crowd and doing what they're doing. **EPH 5:3-7; EXO 23:2.**
 - a. Peer pressure and the desire for acceptance have been the undoing of many.
 - b. Standing on principle is something that even foolish people respect. John the Baptist boldly stood out from the crowd and drew a nation unto his principles. **MAR 1:5.**
 - c. Be a leader for good rather than a follower of folly and you will come out ahead. **ECC 8:12; 1PE 3:16; ROM 14:17-18.**
 5. It is NOT by opening yourselves up to allow your lusts to be exploited. **ROM 13:14; PSA 101:3.**
 6. It is NOT by having pleasure in those who live ungodly. **ROM 1:32; PRO 2:14.**
 7. It is by walking in the Spirit, which is following the teaching of the Spirit as given in the Bible. **GAL 5:16; PSA 119:1-3, 9-11.**

8. The real issue is whether you even desire to *not* be a slave to your lusts.
 - a. If it is full liberty that you desire, you will never achieve it under the mastery of your own lusts. **PSA 119:45 c/w JOH 8:31-34.**
 - b. You don't have to play the world's game to be the liberated adult you desire to be (unless you insist on the false liberty of sin).
 - c. You can be a winner in life through godliness (**1TI 4:8 c/w MAT 6:33; 1PE 3:10-11**), holding fast integrity (**JOB 2:3 c/w PSA 26:8-12**), a standout like Noah, Daniel or Job (**EZE 14:14**), someone accepted of God and approved of men (**ROM 14:18**), bearing your own burden (**GAL 6:4-5**), able to build a good life without relying on a welfare check.
 - d. Long before you are given independence, you need to decide: what will I be, sinner or winner?

X. Young people need a good foundation upon which to build a successful transition to adulthood. Note that the following particularly apply to committed believers.

- A. The fear of God is a good foundation stone. **PRO 14:26; 19:23; 22:4.**
 1. It is the beginning of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. **PRO 1:7; 9:10.**
 2. (**PRO 8:13**) The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.
 3. The fear of God will save you from all manner of ill-fated decisions. **PRO 16:6; 14:27.**
 4. A recognition of the omnipresence and omniscience of God is vital. **HEB 4:13.**
 - a. Continually remind yourself that every thing you do is known to the living God Who is to be feared. **HEB 10:31.**
 - b. Regularly repeat, "Jesus Christ is always here, the unseen guest in every room, the silent listener to every word, and the reader of every thought."
 5. A holy fear of God will regulate your emotions and passions, animate your work ethic, circumcise your lips, prevent you from injuring others, save you from defilements, and advance you in this world while preparing you for the next.
- B. The love of God is a good foundation stone. **MAR 12:30.**
 1. Our love of God is responsive to His love for us. **1JO 4:10, 19.**
 - a. Considering how undeserving we are of God's love and yet are its objects, we should out of gratitude love Him with all our being.
 - b. It is ungratefulness that accelerates the descent into vile corruption. **ROM 1:21-32.**
 - c. Ungratefulness towards God will spill over to ungratefulness to others, and this will have negative blowback in many ways in everyday life.
 2. The love of God is proved by obedience. **JOH 14:15.**
 3. The love of God is the only way to know if we truly love others. **1JO 5:2-3.**
 4. The pleasure of God should be a primary concern. **JOH 8:29 c/w HEB 13:20-21.**
 - a. This will make us serviceable to others. **ROM 15:1-3.**
 - b. By contrast, we read of those who "...please not God, and are contrary to all men" (**1TH 2:15**).
 - c. Successful adult life is very much dependent upon the triumph of selflessness over selfishness: normal people want to relate to, do business with, and trust the former rather than the latter.
- C. Trust in God is a good foundation stone. **HEB 11:6; 1JO 5:4.**
 1. Scripture is filled with God's promises to those who trust Him: promises that are eternal and temporal, spiritual and material, blessings and chastenings.

2. God's promises are guarantees, not waffles. **2CO 1:18-20.**
 3. Trust in God is the antidote to the many fears that all men must face. **PSA 56:4; 23:4.**
 4. Trust in God is sometimes not so much a matter of knowing all the details of the future or how God will provide but simply knowing for sure what you must and must not do in order to please Him. **HEB 11:8.**
 5. This trust in God will embolden you in all the trials and challenges of life while also giving you a peace about them. **ISA 26:3; PHIL 4:6-7.**
- D. Hope is a good foundation stone. **HEB 11:1.**
1. As long as God and you are both alive, there is hope: hope for mercy (**PSA 147:11**), hope for victory (**PSA 78:7-9**), hope for deliverance (**PSA 119:166**), hope for the future (**ROM 8:24-25**), hope that godly desire be fulfilled (**PSA 37:3-5**).
 2. Hope counters despair, and to give oneself over to despair is to turn one's back on God.
 3. Hope will strengthen you inwardly whereas preoccupation with all the evil in the world will enervate and handicap you. **ROM 16:19 c/w 1PE 3:12-16; JOH 16:33.**
- E. With what mentality will you approach life: victim or victor?
1. A victim mentality will tend to blame others rather than doing what is good and right. **MAT 25:24-26.**
 - a. Mark it well: fear is often a mask of sloth (**PRO 26:13**). It is easier to whine, complain, scream and do nothing rather than act.
 - b. This mentality will concoct unrealistic dangers and react accordingly. **PRO 28:1.**
 - c. Parents: be cautious against saturating your children with fears about all the wickedness, skullduggery and conspiracy that exists in the world.
 - (1) For that matter, why saturate yourself with those fears? **PSA 37:1, 7-8.**
 - (2) If you are not planning on actively fighting something, why dwell on it? Choose your battles wisely.
 2. A victor mentality will rather analyze a challenge, devise an approach to overcome it, and act. David did so with Goliath. **1SAM 17:32-40 c/w PHIL 4:13.**
- F. What is your motivator? What regulates your decision-making, your choices?
1. Ungodly fear, anger, hatred, envy, lust, covetousness, impatience, pride, sloth, etc., are all negative motivators that displease God and will cause many foolish, painful and expensive decisions in life.
 2. Negative attitudes and emotions in general tend to breed despair, discolor relationships, inhibit personal growth and productivity, and alienate oneself from others.
 3. Positive attitudes and emotions will rather energize and comfort you in all situations and stimulate others in a good direction. **PHIL 1:12-14.**
 4. Faith, hope and love will build a better life than fear, hate and lust.
- G. Much of what we become in life depends upon our internal thoughts. **PRO 23:7; MAT 12:34-35.**
1. Warped perceptions of self, of the world or even God will impair our ability to deal with reality.
 2. Convince yourself that goodness, diligence and obedience is futile in the present evil culture and you will go nowhere good in life.
 3. Convince yourself that everyone is out to get you and you build yourself a jail cell

of paranoia that is locked only by yourself.

4. What you feed your mind will either feed your frustrations or your faith for overcoming (**1JO 5:4**). Remember **PHIL 4:8**.
5. Young people would be better off reading substantive short works and novels with positive characters and themes rather than let any animated screen train their minds.