



Are We Neglecting Our Youth?

AN ARTICLE REPRINT SERIES

ARE WE NEGLECTING OUR NATION'S YOUTH?

Parents are increasingly neglecting their most important responsibility, often with tragic results. It is time to take a closer look at this important subject, for the youth of today are the adults of tomorrow.

NEVER have our young people had more leisure time, better food, better education, or more material goods. Yet youthful violence, aggression, and hostility is more pronounced than in any period of modern history. Forty percent of United States crimes of violence and two thirds of crimes against property (80% of vandalism) are committed by those under twenty-one.

And the U.S. is by no means alone in this phenomenon. Youth crime and violence are epidemic in almost all "advanced" countries.

"We are experiencing a breakdown in the process of making human beings human," stresses Cornell psychologist and career child watcher Urie Bronfenbrenner.

It would be grossly misleading to implicate that all modern youth are turning out "bad." There are innumerable notable exceptions with which we are all familiar. Still, our children and young adults—tomorrow's most valuable and important resource—are tempted to respond to alluring but warped social forces that have already pushed untold numbers into heartache, disillusionment, and ruined lives.

Parents on the Run. Many forces have caused this crisis, but without a doubt the biggest single factor is that youth and parents increasingly are going their separate ways.

Having lost their spiritual and moral roots, many parents are running, many literally, from one of the most important responsibilities in life: that of preparing the future generation under their charge to become intelligent, self-disciplined, responsible, productive, decent human beings.

"An increasing number of parents

have resigned their responsibility for the character of their child," says Dr. Amitai Etzioni, professor of sociology at Columbia University. "It's as elementary as that."

Caught up in a whirlwind of work, social, or entertainment activities, many parents have little time, desire, or energy to show affection or to give positive training and discipline to their offspring. Yet these are the basic essentials of "making human beings human."

Finding their children irritating, ungrateful, unrewarding, or "in the way," many parents have come to resent their children.

Backed up by stacks of social statistics from government agencies, Bronfenbrenner points to an alarming but irrefutable fact: Upsidedown homes and family fracture, while more serious in poor and nonwhite groups, cut right across all income, race, and education categories.

To compound the problem, more modern women are beginning to desert their home and family. In some places, wives actually outnumber husbands as runaways.

Working Mothers. Another well-established trend—the desire of mothers to pursue a career outside the home—hasn't improved overall parent-child relationships or character training.

One third of American mothers of preschool children are in the labor force. More than half of our school-age children now have mothers who work outside the home, mostly full time. While this is not to say it is always harmful for mothers to work outside the home (much depends on the family circumstance, age of children, and quality of training), this

situation has produced a growing number of neglected children who barely see or know their parents, or vice versa.

Worst Fruit from Child Rearing Extremes. While broken homes often engender a great deal of youthful problems, much dehumanizing is done in intact homes where child-rearing extremes or inconsistency is the rule.

Untold numbers of homes are not homes, but battlegrounds where children and parents endlessly "fight it out," with many parents intimidated and cowering before their child's every selfish whim.

In too many homes at the other extreme, harsh, oppressive, whimsical, or capricious parental discipline leaves a variety of deep scars on its youthful victims. The toll of emotionally and physically battered and abused children mounts up into the hundreds of thousands every year.

In between are a large group of parental oscillators; they swing back and forth between being too strict and too lenient. Unhappy with the results of their inconsistency, many just give up and take the path of least resistance.

Parenting—A Dying Art. Parental influence is rapidly diminishing to a very low point. Many parents seem to be blindly apathetic or demoralized while a growing list of ersatz "parents" indoctrinate their children with questionable values and attitudes.

For many younger children, television—with its violence and inanity—is frequently used as a flickering electronic parent. TV now occupies more waking hours of millions of young children than any other single

influence—including both parents and schools.

Peer groups, schools, preschools, and various child-care centers have also taken over the role that too many parents seem reluctant to perform. While none of these are necessarily wrong, and in some regards may be quite beneficial, none fulfill the major responsibility of preparing youth for mature, responsible adulthood.

Even after six years of formal schooling, though, an average child has spent only seven percent of his or her life in school. Ninety-three percent of the child's life has been influenced by the moral, ethical, and social values of the home, neighborhood, friends, community, or church.

So without the active participation of parents or guardians who value and exhibit some measure of the qualities of respect, cooperation, and concern for others, there is almost no possibility that the next generation can learn them.

"What is needed," says Bronfenbrenner, "is a change in our ways of living that will once again bring adults back into the lives of children and children back into the lives of adults."

Parents in Need of Help. Responsible parents dare not depend on hope and luck to fashion the critical attitudes they value in their children. We cannot really expect desirable behavior in our children if we haven't done our homework early in their lives. To a large degree, we reap what we sow.

There is a critical period during the first four or five years when a child can most readily get a solid foundation of proper attitudes and values. We must not fail the generation which is still responsive to sound values and principles of good character.

Too frequently young, immature or unprepared men and women find themselves saddled with the responsibility of an impressionable, helpless infant about which they know almost nothing.

How many parents have received one iota of formal training in the very critical area of child rearing? Society demands that those who raise chickens and pigs have more training than those who rear children. What a tragedy and travesty!

WAYWARD TEEN-AGERS' ADVICE TO PARENTS

Several years ago, a minister, C. Galea, was assigned to the Guelph Correctional Centre for summer work. During his time there he developed an excellent rapport with the young lawbreakers there. After becoming acquainted with them, he asked the boys to delve into their backgrounds for clues as to why they had ended up in that institution for delinquents. He asked them to draw up a "code for parents," using as a basis specific areas where their own parents had failed. Here is what they advised:

1. Keep cool. Don't lose your temper in the crunch. Keep the lid on when things go wrong. Kids need the reassurance that comes from controlled responses.

2. Don't get strung out from too much booze or too many pills. When we see our parents reaching for those crutches, we get the idea that nobody goes out there alone, that it's perfectly okay to go for a bottle or a capsule when things get heavy. Remember, your children are great imitators. And we lose respect for parents who tell us to behave one way while they are behaving another way.

3. Bug us a little. Be strict and consistent in dishing out discipline. Show us who's boss. It gives us a feeling of security to know we've got some strong supports under us.

4. Don't blow your class. Keep the dignity of parenthood. Stay on that pedestal. Your children have put you there because they need

someone to look up to. Don't try to dress, dance, or talk like your kids. You embarrass us and you look ridiculous.

5. Light a candle. Show us the way. Tell us God is not dead, sleeping, or on vacation. We need to believe in something bigger and stronger than ourselves.

6. If you catch us lying, stealing, or being cruel, get tough. Let us know WHY what we did was wrong. Impress on us the importance of not repeating such behavior. When we need punishment, dish it out. But let us know you still love us, even though we have let you down. It'll make us think twice before we make the same move again.

7. Call our bluff. Make it clear that you mean what you say. Don't be wishy-washy. Don't compromise. And don't be intimidated by our threats to drop out of school or leave home. Stand firm. If you collapse, we will know we beat you down, and we will not be happy about the "victory." Kids don't want everything they ask for.

8. Be honest with us. Tell the truth no matter what. And be straight-arrow about it. Lukewarm answers make us uneasy. We can smell uncertainty a mile away. This means being generous with praise. If you give us kids a few compliments once in a while, we will be able to accept criticism more readily. We want you to tell it like it is.

—Ann Landers,

Field Newspaper Syndicate

Many parents do not understand the emotional or intellectual needs of their children. Many parents are unwittingly reinforcing in their children the very habits they want to eliminate, largely from an improper approach or wrong emotional communications with their children.

No parent is perfect. And a child is not usually destroyed by a few mistakes. Every parent can improve on the parenting art: yet it will take effort to get the proper balance of knowledge, methods, and attitudes.

What is a good parent? Every parent needs to know right moral values, how to set limits, how to encourage intellectual and emotional growth, as well as how to discipline within a framework of love. It's a mighty big task.

The helpful principles on the following pages, while not total answers to every child rearing problem, are solid, common-sense methods to use in training your children to become responsible and useful members of society. □

CONTROLLING YOUTHFUL ENERGY

"The glory of young men," says the Bible, "is their strength . . ." (Prov. 20:29). One of the greatest problems in any society is the harnessing of the energy and vitality of its youth. It is also one of the greatest difficulties of parenthood!

"Johnny! Please *sit still!* Stop jerking and jiggling!" shouts the exasperated mother of a ten-year-old. "What's the matter—have you got ants in your pants?" she fumes. "Can't you *ever* be still and quiet?"

Parents have been saying things like that for centuries.

Virtually all "normal" children are bundles of pent-up, explosive energy. And that energy must be released! When it is bottled up, suppressed and thwarted, it builds up *incredible* pressures in young children. The longer energy is suppressed the more frustrated the child becomes.

Just as an experiment, try this sometime. You are driving along the freeway or the motorway. It's an extended trip of several hours. There are few stops except for gasoline or "rest" stops. As you drive, study the expression on the faces of your children in the rear-view mirror as they sit, squirm, struggle, wrestle, tussle, tug and pull away at each other in the back seat of the automobile. The longer they have to sit there, the worse their attitudes will become. Sometimes they will fall asleep in sheer frustration. They may keep saying, "When are we going to *get* there, daddy?" "How much longer?" "I have to go to the bathroom." (He just went 15 minutes earlier!)

The longer this agitation continues, the more irritable the parents become. After all, they would like a nice, quiet, relaxing trip!

Before long an explosion takes place.

"Will you kids SHADDAP!! Just sit still and be quiet! We'll get there when we get there and I don't want to hear anymore about it!"

Sulk. Pout. Fume. Resent.

The atmosphere in the car has degenerated considerably since the trip began.

Why?

Simply because the parents did not understand, nor know how to cope with, the factor of their children's *energy!* It's a law of nature—*energy must be released*. It must be burnt up, utilized.

Yet children often lack the wisdom to know how to *rightly* utilize their own vast energy reserves. We are told that "a child *left to himself* brings shame to his mother" (Prov. 29:15). Children, left to their own devices, often use their energy in a *destructive* manner.

This is one of the principal reasons why children cooped up and left alone in a big-city environment often resort to acts of violence and vandalism. Children cut loose from the warm and creative environment of close and loving family unit frequently become youthful vagrants prowling the streets and alleys of cities looking for destructive outlets for those pent-up energies. Such neglect on the part of parents is one of the key factors involved in the formation of adolescent street gangs.

The conclusion is obvious. Re-

sponsible parents must provide their children with constructive, enjoyable outlets for that vast reservoir of dynamic, vibrant energy.

A child should never be cut totally adrift from his family unit. He should be able to find expression *within* it. He should never be left *exclusively* to his or her own devices during those critical formative years. (This is *not* to say a child should not be taught independence, self-reliance and responsibility.) Parents must strive to understand their child's need for constant activity and provide ways for the release of that energy.

Family outings, sports activities, hikes, camp-outs, musical endeavors, building projects, wrestling matches with Dad, walks and runs, jogging as a family, exercising together, etc., are all invaluable and constructive outlets which can be shared by all of the family.

Children should be taught and encouraged to "Think Family." The family environment should ideally be the *most* enjoyable place for a child to be. It should be the most interesting, the most satisfying.

A child who cannot find satisfaction and activity within his own family unit will seek it elsewhere. Responsible, perceptive parents will recognize this need and seriously strive to provide the right kind of exciting, interest-filled environment for their children.

Granted, it takes time and planning to be a responsible parent. But isn't it worth it? Will you do your part in helping to control the youthful "energy crisis"? □

Youth of Today . . .

WHERE IS THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE?

Why do so many young people today have the blahs? Why are so many TURNED OFF? Why do they DROP OUT? Should life be so BORING for young people? Is there any REAL ADVENTURE left to be had in our times? Or are the only adventures left in our society found in sex, drugs and violence? If you're under thirty—in age or spirit—you'd better read this article!

ADVENTURE! Challenge! Trail-blazing! Conquest! New horizons! These action-packed words have stirred generations of young people in the world over!

Youth has always been keenly *responsive* to the challenge of adventure, *eager* to tackle new and more demanding obstacles, *anxious* to do what has yet been undone by "the older generation." Countless tales of courage, heroism, exploration, discovery, and rugged adventure attest to this fact. But is this vital commodity of youth changing today?

Are young people today losing *the spirit of adventure*?

It depends upon what kind of "adventure" you mean! Mind-bending drugs and jaded sexual exploits are "adventure" enough for many youths today. For others "adventure" is to be found in the revolutionary political arena—a Molotov cocktail in one hand, the writings of Lenin, Marx or Mao in the other! But is that "the real thing"? Or will these prove in time to be *phony substitutes* for the deeply satisfying pursuits and accomplishments that others, in other times and better days, have tasted?

Come on! If you're *young* and you're *alive* and you think you can take a challenge, take this one! Challenge *yourself*! Do YOU HAVE *THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE*?

"Adventure"—What Is It? Listen to what Maurice Herzog, the gallant young Frenchman who led the successful 1950 expedition to the top of

26,492-foot Annapurna, writes about adventure:

"As life has grown progressively easier over the centuries, with adventure disappearing from the face of the earth, man's physical organism has protested. Society's solution is sport. It is notable that sports have developed most brilliantly in advanced societies. *Sport has no meaning when daily life provides its parallel.*

"For the ultimate stage of our comfort-keyed civilization, man will doubtless sustain himself by consuming a variety of little pills. But just as swallowing nourishment through pills will never entirely supplant gourmandizing and the pleasures of the table, so sport will never abolish a thirst for natural activity without training manuals or tricks. And the solution is not a supersport [like American football, basketball, baseball]. *The solution is adventure—adventure in which a man's total energies and all his physical and mental resources are involved. In adventure, muscles, nerves, instincts, reflexes, even brains—in a word, the entire man—are taxed to the full*" (*Man Against Nature*, collected and edited by Charles Neider, "Adventure—The Unending Challenge," Maurice Herzog, p. xi, emphasizes ours throughout).

Here, with clear reasoning, this world-famous mountaineer exemplifies the need for man to be challenged, to be alert, alive and active—not sedentary, placid, and passive!

A Little World. Face it! For most people today what was once "the big, wide world" has become "the little world." You know what we mean?

Today it's the little world in front of the TV set. The little world of a narrow, big-city street. The little world inside the little house, or the little car or the little classroom!

"Where's it at?" youth wants to know. They're not finding it in the little worlds they were born into—and have not yet escaped from. Not only is it a little world, with narrow horizons, it's also a soft world, an *in-door* world—or if outdoors, a smog-choked, noise-polluted, deadly dull and *boring* world!

Are there any true challenges left? Or have we passed the *last frontier*? What's it going to be from here on out? Just more of the same until there's standing room only? Will the "adventures" of *Tomorrow's World* be about as thrilling as waiting for a bus, or punching a clock, or sitting stalled in a traffic jam? No, fortunately *a much better world awaits you—if you do your part today!*

Tomorrow's World will need young men and women with rugged stamina and courage. They will have to face some of the greatest challenges the world has ever seen!

Tomorrow's *leaders* won't be the kind of people who can only sedately reflect on the problem, pose alternatives, or pass the buck. They will have to *DO SOMETHING!* The stress will be on dynamic action, not

another "blue ribbon committee" to study the problem!

Recognizing the need for this kind of active leadership, what can you do to prepare yourself for facing tomorrow's problems and challenges? How can you respond to the call of adventure today and be prepared to meet it head-on tomorrow?

Be Active, Not Passive! The proper functioning of your mind depends in large measure on right use of your body! Learn to use your God-given arms and legs as your Creator intended. This means *exercise*! It means vigorous, hard *WORK*. This is one of the biggest problems of youth today—too little work and exercise. That's why so many are soft and flaccid—and plainly *effeminate*!

The book of Proverbs is full of exhortations to learn to labor productively *with your hands* as a prime means to diligence in life. Young men and women are to learn to work willingly with their hands. The Proverbs speak of the lazy man whose hands refuse to labor (Prov. 21:25), and who become so lazy he can hardly bring his food to his mouth (19:24)!

The *legs* need exercising, too. Walking anywhere today is almost unheard of! Machines must take us everywhere we go, but they rob us of much-needed exercise. Develop a love of walking, running, hiking. Swimming is also a fine form of exercise. Learn to walk erectly, breathe deeply, and feel your body respond to your commands. This is a vital part of becoming an *active person*!

Don't sit on the sidelines, watch from the bleachers, or lie sprawled in front of the TV set. Get in there and *participate*! Every young person should know a number of team sports and be able to play them fairly well. These might include baseball, basketball, volleyball, touch and flag football. He should learn some of the individual sports, too, like tennis, golf, handball, squash, racquetball and those taught in track and field. Even a fair level of accomplishment in these areas will bring you enormous satisfaction in life—in the form of a healthy body and alert mind, in learning the lessons of good sportsmanship and teamwork, plus the personal qualities of drive, determination, endurance, training, etc.

Be active! Develop your skills!

Learn to play fairly and courageously. All this stimulates the spirit of adventure and develops the whole man!

Develop a Love of the Outdoors!

When Almighty God completed His marvelous physical creation, He "saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good"! (Gen. 1:31.) Indeed it was—and *still is*! Granted, man has done a lot to pollute what He made perfect and pure, but there is still much to see, experience, behold, and appreciate.

Forests and woodlands *are* "very good." They hold fascinating sights, sounds, and secrets. Mountains, high and low, new or old, rugged or smooth are *marvelous*—bigger than man, beyond his ability to completely defile or "conquer." Upward they beckon with their forested slopes, cascading streams, and breathtaking views.

The sea and its shore are also "very good." They too are *big* and awe inspiring. Their forms of life are seemingly endless—water birds, fish (large and small), clams and crabs, lobsters and sea lions. All parts of the truly "*great outdoors*."

So are the vast, windswept Great Plains. Here are other forms of life and very beautiful scenes. Upland game birds, prairie dogs, antelope and deer, often against a backdrop of shimmering seas of golden grain.

No matter where you may live, there is a part of God's outdoor world available to you! By simply putting forth a little effort, even big-city dwellers can escape the concrete jungles of man's making to the much more beautiful, peaceful, and inspiring world that *God* made! You don't have to stay penned in and bound to a modern megalopolis!

You can start by getting a map of your home state. State and national park systems publish excellent, free maps and brochures. Even oil company highway maps show special points of interest, parks, recreational areas, etc. Libraries are full of such publications. Many bookstores have a special section for maps and travel guides. You should have no trouble finding out *where* to go. Some imagination and ingenuity will turn up *the way*.

Most youths today have access to cars. Many have a car of their own. Others have motor bikes. Bicycles

provide good exercise and cheap transportation, but should be used on less heavily trafficked roads. But you don't have to go places all by yourself! *Thoughtful parents should take the lead in such outings!*

But whatever you do, don't make the mistake of thinking that if you were born in, or now must live in, a crowded, nerve-jangling, people-choked city, you are forever doomed to your fate. You can—and *must*—*get out occasionally*—to preserve a balanced, sane, and healthy view of life and the world around you! You need to *be outdoors* to develop a *love* of the outdoors!

Christ the Outdoor Man. Never forget that Jesus Christ was—and is today—the greatest naturalist, conservationist, and *outdoor man* of all time! Notice what Bruce Barton writes in his book *The Man Nobody Knows* (The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., New York, 1962, p. 43): "All His days were spent in the open air . . . on the Sabbath He was in the synagogue because that was where the people were gathered, but by far the greater part of His teaching was done on the shores of His lake, or in the cool recesses of the hills. He walked constantly from village to village. His face was tanned by the sun and wind. Even at night He slept outdoors when He could—turning His back on the hot walls of the city and slipping away into the healthful freshness of the Mount of Olives. *He was an energetic outdoor man. The vigorous activities* of His days gave His nerves the strength of steel."

Mr. Barton gives us an accurate and fresh perspective of some of the *physical* aspects about the true Jesus Christ! He did not come as a soft, pedantic, effeminate teacher of nice sayings and platitudes. He came as a *MAN!!*—a rugged outdoorsman who could lead other equally rugged and masculine men like Peter, a commercial fisherman. Men like Peter would *never* have followed the so-called "Jesus" the artists have portrayed for us—a "man" who looks as if he never saw the light of day!

Let's follow the example of the greatest man who ever lived and who set us a perfect example! Let's develop the same kind of love for the outdoors He had and has today! The same kind of vigorous activities will

prepare us for the challenges of His wonderful World Tomorrow!

Keep It Safe and Sane! If you develop an active and energetic mind and body and a love for the outdoors, this next step comes logically—you will naturally want to seek out *SAFE* and *SANE* challenges and adventures!

Each outdoor activity has its own particular challenge, provides its own adventure. The hiker and climber quests for his destination. It may be a distant lake where the fishing promises to be excellent. Perhaps the goal is the summit of a high hill or mountain. Such goals toss out a challenge. Can you make it? Will you succeed?

The fun comes from planning and preparing to attain the goal, and then putting forth all the effort and using all the ingenuity necessary to do it!

Hunting and fishing have their challenges, too! These outdoor sports require skill, patience and technique and build within the sportsman the traits of character gained only in the outdoors.

And in the going and coming, and while on location, there are countless sights, sounds, and lessons—a hawk circling overhead, the rushing of a waterfall, the lonely howl of a coyote or wolf, the glimpse of a deer, the explosion underfoot of a grouse or pheasant, the impressive track of a bear, the spoor of an elk, the amazing intricacy of a spider web, beautiful rocks and crystals, tumbled and tortured strata in the rocks and roadsides, wildflowers in full bloom, the startled whistle of a woodchuck, a glorious sunset marking the end of a perfect day.

But remember I said “SAFE AND SANE” adventures! Why did I qualify that? Because the pursuit of dangerous adventures can and does lead to permanent injury and *death*! Adventure does not have to be death-defying and nerve-shattering to be challenging and rewarding—*nor should it be!*

When Satan the devil was tempting Jesus Christ to *sin*, he encouraged Him to jump off a high building while claiming the promise of God’s protection (see Matt. 4:3-6). Jesus quickly shot back the right reply, “Thou shalt not tempt [or test] the Lord thy God”! (Verse 7). By intentionally putting our lives in jeopardy, we tempt or test God to see whether

or not He will protect us. God forbids such foolishness! To have God’s protection, one must qualify for it! This means we must minimize and avoid risks and hazards, not invite them!

“Be Prepared.” To this end, the old Boy Scout motto, “Be prepared,” should be rigidly adhered to. Solid and thorough preparations include such considerations as proper clothing and footwear, adequate and nourishing food supplies, clean, pure water, navigational aids—map and compass—first aid training and supplies, matches, etc. All these requirements vary according to the nature of the outing, but certain laws of common sense, restraint, safety, and judgment must *always* prevail!

If you are young and relatively inexperienced, take this word of caution! *Recognize your inexperience and limitations!* Usually youth does not do so unless or until they are forcibly driven home—but by then it may be too late! Don’t let a cut or burn, getting lost or stranded, or a bad fall teach you this lesson the hard way! Be careful in the outdoors! Exercise judgment and restraint! Take every precaution and safeguard within reason—such as telling others where you’re going, when you expect to return, etc.

And above and beyond all your human efforts, ask Almighty God for protection! Claim His promise of Psalm 34:7, “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” You can count on God’s angelic protection if you have done your part, and are looking to God to do His!

The program outlined above—*BEING ACTIVE, DEVELOPING A LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS, AND SEEKING AND ACCEPTING SAFE AND SANE ADVENTURES*—is one that will *start you in the right direction*. It will *begin* preparing you for life’s highest and finest adventures. But make no mistake about it, *IT IS NOT AN END IN ITSELF!*

Beyond the Physical Realm. There is a world beyond the physical realm—an unseen, *spiritual* world. There is a God in heaven who gives man his very life and being for a great and awesome *PURPOSE!* Yes, there is a purpose in life—a *reason for being*—and that transcending purpose is *the greatest adventure of all!* God’s plan for mankind *chal-*

lenges the total man—physical and spiritual! It pits man against himself in a *kind of right* “competition” known only to a chosen few, and rewards the victorious with a sense of satisfaction beyond belief. It is God Almighty who is the Ultimate Challenger—who supplies man with the adventure of entering His very own Family for all eternity!

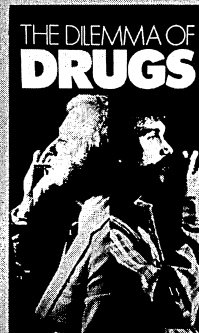
Apart from contact with this great God, you can go on vainly searching for the meaning of it all, catching your pleasures while you can, but you will never figure out *why you were born, where you are going, and what is the outcome of it all!*

Not only will you never appreciate God’s physical “work” and creation, you will never, unaided and on your own, find out and discover His true *spiritual* Work. For this adventure you need the best Guide in the business! You must have access to His maps, His savvy, know-how, and experience! And you must become a part of His highly organized *expedition*.

Take heart! *You’re on the right track this very minute as you hold this in your hands.* □

DRUGS: the good, the bad, and the deadly

From booze to hash, from caffeine to heroin, mind-altering drugs have become a way of life. Nearly everyone needs a “fix”—for pleasure, for escape, or just to keep going. If you’d like to know more about drug use, its benefits and dangers, write for *The Dilemma of Drugs*. It’s free. Mailing addresses are on the back cover.



“What the World Needs Now Is . . .” CHARACTER!

With this one word, most of the world's problems could be solved. Why? How? When? Can character really be relevant to the 20th century? Is it for the young? We now find out.

THIS IS A *mind-shattering* age we live in! It's the age of “Mary Jane” and “Jesus Rock.” Young musicians beat out the amplified rhythms of the blues, “trips,” sex and religion while the world's youth jerks and cavorts mesmerically before them. Society's older members look on helplessly. Meanwhile, the Establishment itself flounders, while crime, unemployment, taxes, divorce, inflation and ecological crises soar out of sight.

To some this is the “dawning of the age of Aquarius” as interest in the occult, associated mysticism and other “black arts” enjoys new popularity. Bookstores stock their shelves with volumes on astrology, Tarot, I Ching, and witchcraft—and do a land-office business.

In this age of “anything goes,” dirty bookstores and so-called “adult” movies pockmark the face of the nation like chicken pox.

This is quite an age all right!

And it's a *tough age to grow up in!* It's a thwarting and a *frustrating* age. This is a time of enormous psychological pressures, especially on the young. The pressure is on to CONFORM, to blend with contemporaries of one's own age group and “run with the pack.”

How Does It Happen? How does a young person become caught up in the vortex of conformity? How does a lovable, seemingly innocent little child become transformed into a foul-mouthed, long-haired, pot-smoking drop-out? What processes effect such a transformation? The first major influence in any child's life is, of course, his *parents*. Until about age six, Dad and Mom are the ultimate authority on everything.

The child imitates their mannerisms, actions personality traits and, to a degree, their likes and dislikes.

Then the child enters the school environment. A new influence is added in the form of the teacher. Before long the child comes home quoting “Miss So and So.” The teacher's influence may, in some cases, begin to override that of the parents. As school-life continues, the child becomes increasingly conscious of the other children.

By junior high school the influence of the “peer group” may begin to outweigh that of the parents and the teachers. As the student passes through the high-school years, the sway of the “*peer group*” emerges *supreme!* The average young person then becomes *vastly* more concerned with what is “in” than with parental wishes or the desires of his teachers! The high-school student **DESPERATELY** wants to be **ACCEPTED** by his or her contemporaries!

In order to accomplish all this, the teen-ager *must conform* to existing peer-group standards and vogues! He must do what the other kids do and “run with the pack.” To do otherwise is to invite “*social ostracism*.” Unless the student falls in with current clothing styles and musical vogues, he is an outcast! *It is not easy* to survive without conforming to the mores of this high-velocity society.

Many teens find the only way to bridge the gap between the Establishment (parents, teachers, police, rulers, etc.) and their peers is to play “Jekyll and Hyde.” They conduct themselves one way around the Establishment, and another around their peers. There are changes in vocabulary, personal habits, hair styles,

facial expressions, etc., in order to conform to the wishes of whichever group the young person is with. This constant adjusting and readjusting is a tremendous *strain* on the young mind! Many youths finally resort to an *open break* with the Establishment. They become part of the growing army of disillusioned youth “sit-tin’ on the dock of the bay.”

What the World Needs Now . . . In a permissive, hedonistic and violent age the pressures to conform are gigantic and seemingly irresistible. *It is not easy* to live a clean, moral, wholesome and ultimately profitable life in the midst of a dying, decadent, out-of-control society. It is *intensely difficult* to resist the pulls and lures of drugs, sexual looseness, X-rated movies, pornography, violence and all the other evils that are gnawing at the fibre of modern society. No wonder young people tend to be “turned off.”

But it doesn't have to turn you off!

You don't have to be a drop-out. You don't have to conform to the antics of a society that is rapidly hurtling itself into oblivion!

You *should* be DIFFERENT. And in a **POSITIVE** way. Just because it is difficult to live sanely and rightly doesn't mean it is impossible.

“What the world needs now is love, sweet love . . .” so says the song. And it's true! The world *does* need love. But that's not ALL IT NEEDS! If this strife-filled, war-torn old world is to survive into a better age, then its people need something else besides love. Something to make love work. What the world *desperately* needs is a solid nucleus of young men and women with **CHARACTER**.

What Is Character? "Character . . . what's that?" some might say. Character is the most necessary ingredient any person must possess in order to achieve satisfaction and ultimate success in life! Without it, no person can achieve a happy, meaningful life.

The acquisition of character is the key to fulfilling the *whole purpose* in human life. NOTHING could be more important!

Here is a good working definition of character: "True character involves the capacity and the *willingness to find what is right*, the will to *choose the right way*, then the strength of will to *resist all other actions* and impulses and *DO what is right!*"

How many people do you know whose lives personify that definition of character? Does yours? Imagine how much the world would be changed if all mankind possessed true character? THAT'S what the world REALLY NEEDS NOW!!

If this world really is to HAVE a tomorrow—and it shall!—then its young men and women of *today* need to begin to develop the character to *build* that tomorrow! This world needs young people who are willing to step out into the world, *seek the right way* and have the *intestinal fortitude to follow it* NO MATTER WHAT. There is no room for compromise here.

Character Development—Is It for the Young? "Religion," assert the young, "is for little old ladies in felt hats!" To millions of modern teenagers, becoming a "Christian" is the "*squarest*" thing they could possibly do. Youth, they allege, is the time to "sow your wild oats" and "have a ball." Old age is the time to "get religion" they will claim. In reality, *nothing could be farther from the truth.*

True religion involves the development of CHARACTER! Today, more than ever, *youth needs character.* At this turbulent, crisis-filled juncture in human affairs, a solid nucleus of character-filled young men and women is a crying *necessity.* This world desperately needs young people who are willing to seek out what is right, and then, in spite of all influences to the contrary, have the courage to step out and perform it.

Only those willing to do so will ever achieve maximum success and happiness in this life.

Tomorrow's World of productivity and abundance will be made up of such young leaders.

Bible Examples. The Creator's Instruction Book is filled with examples of *young people* who were not afraid to demonstrate character in spite of very trying circumstances. Such examples "were written down *for our instruction* upon whom the end of the ages has come" (I Cor. 10:11, RSV).

Our first case history is that of a young Hebrew. If he were alive today, he would most likely be named "Joe Jacobson." In Bible terms, however, he was known as "*Joseph.*" His father's name was Jacob. Joseph was the next-to-youngest of twelve brothers. Our story opens when Joseph is *seventeen years old* (Gen. 37:2).

Joseph and his brothers had the responsibility of taking care of their father's vast flocks of sheep. As a result, the young men spent a great deal of time together.

Joseph was his father's favorite son and Jacob did not try to hide the fact. In fact, Jacob even made Joseph a special multi-colored coat as a symbol of his love (verse 3). Joseph tactlessly flaunted the garment around his brothers. As a result the brothers became intensely jealous and hateful toward young Joseph. They spoke sarcastically and cynically to him (verse 4).

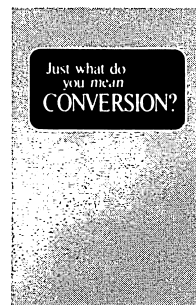
In addition, God had inspired Joseph to have some dreams of prophetic significance. In the dreams God symbolically indicated that there would come a time when Joseph would rise above the rest of his family. In his youthful exuberance, Joseph could not help boasting about these dreams to his brothers. This certainly did not help matters. This only intensified his brothers' animosity toward him.

As their anger and jealousy reached a fever pitch, the young men began to plot Joseph's death. However, the oldest brother, Reuben, was a little more levelheaded than the rest and he restrained them. He suggested they throw Joseph into a pit, from which he hoped to later rescue him and return him to Jacob. Judah, the more practical-minded brother,

REAL CONVERSION

(You can't
win the prize
unless you
start the race)

The apostle Paul likened the Christian life to a race which must be run for the "prize" of eternal life. A person does not even begin his "Race," however, until he has undergone a *genuine* conversion. The New Testament concept of conversion involves much more than a mere intellectual or ritualistic acceptance of a set of beliefs. True conversion can be defined in two parts. The first involves a definite event which occurs when God fulfills His promise to place the Holy Spirit within a person after certain conditions are met. The second part is a process which continues throughout the Christian's life. If you'd like to know more about the Bible's teaching on conversion, request the free booklet *Just What Do You Mean—CONVERSION?* Write to the address of our office nearest you.



came up with a “better idea.” He suggested *selling* the seventeen-year-old boy into slavery. Some of his brothers then cast Joseph into a pit and went off to eat and to consider this latest plan.

While they were eating, some Midianite merchants happened by. Joseph was then pulled out of the pit and sold to them for twenty silver pieces. They in turn, took young Joseph to Egypt, where he was sold as a slave (Gen. 37:5-28).

Then Joseph was purchased by a high-ranking Egyptian officer named Potiphar. Joseph *matured* a great deal in Potiphar’s household and was given a very responsible job administering his business affairs. Ultimately, *all* of Potiphar’s affairs were directed by the young Joseph (Gen. 39:1-4).

Now let’s step back a moment and get the whole picture. Here is a young man (likely in his early twenties now) who had everything going for him. He was trusted and responsible for the administration of great wealth. In addition to this “. . . Joseph was *good looking and handsome*” (Gen. 39:6, Moffatt translation). He had ability, brains, good looks and an excellent job.

But like most modern young men, he was also exposed to rather overwhelming temptations! Notice how Joseph handled one such temptation in Genesis 39:7-12 (*Living Books of Moses* version).

“One day . . . Potiphar’s wife began making eyes at Joseph, and suggested that he come and *sleep with her*. JOSEPH REFUSED . . . ‘HOW CAN I DO SUCH A WICKED THING AS THIS? IT WOULD BE A GREAT SIN AGAINST GOD.’ But she kept on with her suggestions *day after day*, even though HE REFUSED TO LISTEN . . . then one day as he was in the house going about his work . . . she came and grabbed him by the sleeve demanding, ‘Sleep with me.’ HE TORE HIMSELF AWAY . . . HE FLED FROM THE HOUSE . . .”!!!

Many young men of today would have *welcomed* such a situation. But Joseph was not an *ordinary* young man! He was different in that he had *CHARACTER*. He *KNEW* what was right, and in spite of *intense* and *repeated* temptations his powerful character *prevailed*. The events that

followed ultimately led to his being brought to the attention of the Pharaoh and finally his being made the Prime Minister of all Egypt.

As a result of his character, Joseph achieved glittering *success*. Joseph fulfilled God’s instruction as expressed in I Corinthians 6:18. He *fled* fornication! How many others would have done so? But then, how many others were qualified to be Prime Minister?

Daniel’s Example. *Daniel* is another sterling example of a young teenage boy with *strong character*. Daniel’s character was tested in a *different* area of life than was Joseph’s.

The time was 604 B.C. The house of Judah was in the process of being conquered by the Babylonian Empire under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar. The king had instructed his top eunuch to select some youths of Jewish nobility to undergo a special training program to prepare them for service in the Babylonian government. Among those selected was a young man in his *mid-teens* named Daniel. He was an *outstanding* youth in every way. Those selected were to be “. . . strong, healthy, good-looking lads . . . those who have read widely in many fields, are well informed, *alert* and *sensible*, and have enough poise to look good around the palace” (Dan. 1:4, *Living Prophecies* version).

During their three-year tenure they were to be given a *special diet of exotic foods* similar to those the king himself dined on. However, Babylonian dietary standards were not up to God’s. Daniel realized that to indulge in this diet would physically defile his body! (Dan. 1:5, 8.) Being a young man of *character*, Daniel was not about to *compromise* with God’s high standards. No matter what!

The young Daniel faced a seemingly insurmountable problem! He had been instructed to eat and drink certain foods and wines. To disobey could have meant *death*. After all, he was a *prisoner*. He was taken from a conquered nation. To turn his nose up at the royal cuisine would have been considered an *insult* of the grossest sort. And to have resisted the express wishes of the *king himself* was incredible to say the least. But *Daniel* was *determined not to compromise*.

Wisdom is an important accessory

to character. Realizing he was treading on thin ice, Daniel *diplomatically* and *tactfully* suggested a *test*. He knew if he could prove the efficacy of his own diet over that of the king, then he might be allowed his own diet on a regular basis. He requested a diet of vegetables (pulse) and water. (Not that he was a vegetarian. It is likely the meat offered by the Chaldeans had not been properly slaughtered according to God’s Law or perhaps it had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Lev. 3:17; Acts 15:20. Or possibly only those meats considered “unclean” were being served. Lev. 11; Deut. 14.)

In any case, the chief eunuch agreed to the test and it was carried out. At the end of the 10-day period, it was evident that Daniel’s diet had benefited him greatly (Dan. 1:8-16).

Daniel and his friends were then allowed to continue on the diet they had chosen, and the king’s cuisine was withdrawn. Daniel’s *character, wisdom and determination to do right had paid off!*

Another Test of Character. Some years later, under a different administration, a *government order* was issued *forbidding anyone to pray* to any but the king himself (who was considered a “god”). This ruling was to be enforced for a one-month period (Dan. 6:7). But Daniel was in the habit of *praying three times a day* to the *God of Israel*. He was not about to discontinue this practice which enabled him to remain close to his Creator. In the face of being torn to shreds by vicious lions, Daniel maintained his custom of praying regularly!

He would not be moved from doing what was right! The government officials—who were intensely jealous of Daniel—found him doing so and had him placed in a compound of ravenous lions. A large rock was placed at the entrance barring any escape. Daniel spent the night in the company of these great cats and was released in the morning unharmed! (Dan. 6:10-23.) Almighty God sent an angel to protect Daniel.

Once again the strong and faithful *character* of Daniel *paid off!*

Youth No Excuse! “If I’m old enough to fight (in military service), I’m old enough to drink!” assert

many modern youths. When it comes to the use of alcohol, cigarettes, or the indulgence in premarital sex, many youths will *vehemently* proclaim their eligibility.

Yet when it comes to *learning moral principles* and *exercising character* and self-control—that's for old folks. But it's nothing new. *Youth has long been used as a "cop-out" from responsibility.*

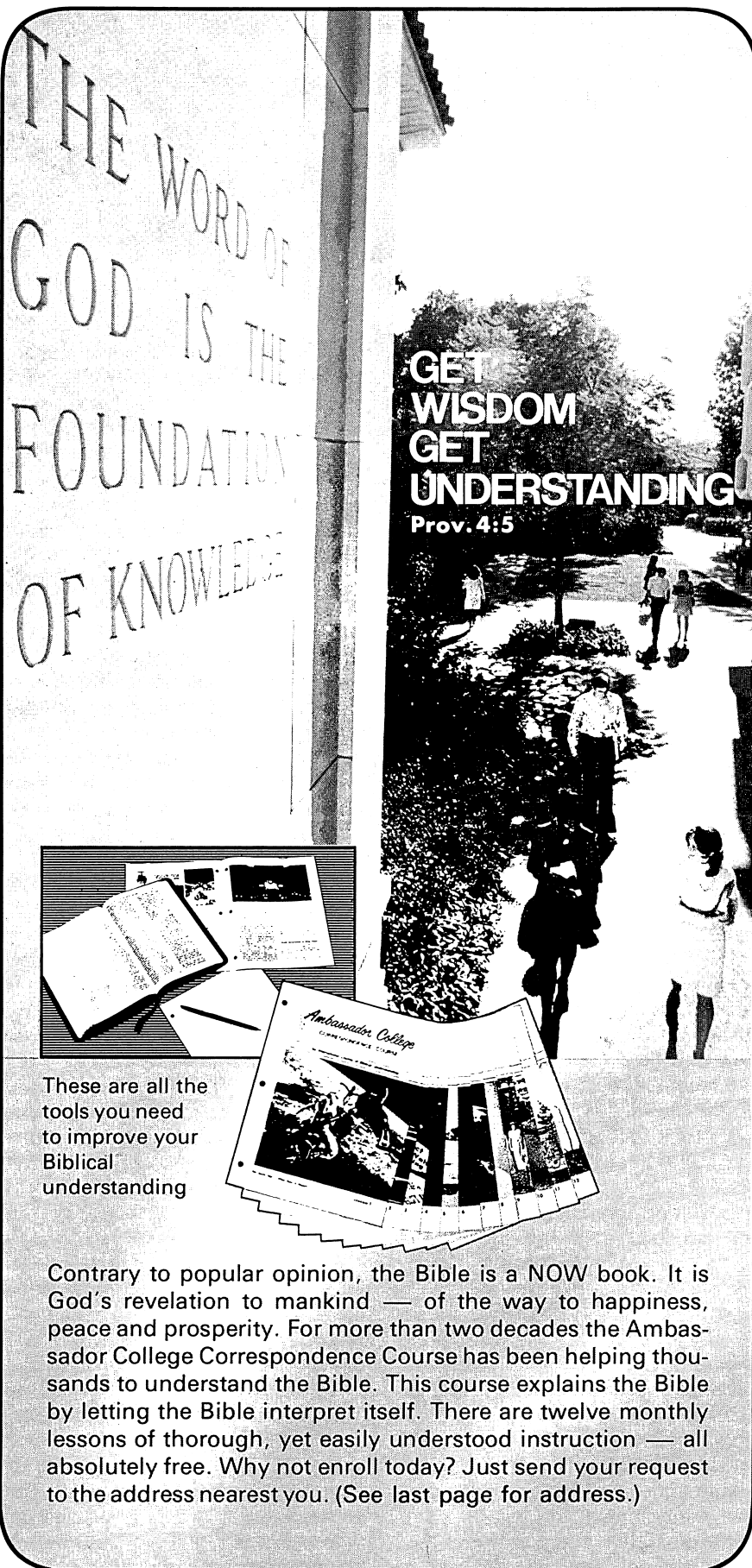
Centuries ago, God chose to use a *young man* to warn a *whole nation* of impending national disaster. But like so many modern teenagers and young people, he too used the old dodge "I'm too young" to avoid responsibility. His name was Jeremiah! Let's notice what transpired in Jeremiah 1:5-6. God said to young Jeremiah: "... I ordained thee a *prophet* unto the nations." Here was a *giant responsibility* thrust on the youthful shoulders of Jeremiah. But notice his all-too-familiar reaction! "O Lord God," I said. 'I can't do that! I'm FAR TOO YOUNG! I'M ONLY A YOUTH!' " (*Living Psalms and Proverbs With the Major Prophets Paraphrased* version.)

But God recognized Jeremiah's "cop-out"! Notice *His* reply! "But the Lord said to me, '*DO NOT SAY, I AM ONLY A YOUTH...*' " (Verse 7, RSV.) Of course, Jeremiah *changed his attitude* and *went ahead* and *fulfilled the responsibility* God had given him. As a result of demonstrating *character* and *doing what was right*, Jeremiah was instrumental in preserving the royal dynastic line of Israel.

Youthfulness should NEVER be used as an excuse to avoid responsibility. The development and exercising of character is not limited to "old fuddy-duddies." Moral excellence and firmness can be demonstrated by children, teenagers and adults alike.

At this crisis-filled point in the human chronicle, God is once again using young people to do His Work. More than ever before, we all need to develop strong, abiding CHARACTER. God wants us to be *successes* in life, to be *truly happy*, and to realize our maximum potential as human beings.

You owe it to yourself to *look into* the matter of *character development* and begin *your own personal program* in it. □



**GET WISDOM
GET UNDERSTANDING**
Prov. 4:5

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an *Open Letter* to the Apocalypse Generation

First my credentials: I'm twenty-three years old and have been associated with the Worldwide Church of God long enough to know what's going on, or most of it anyway. So here goes:

The most nettlesome thing most young people find about the Church is its teaching that the "world" (meaning organized society) is going to end soon.

To be honest, the idea doesn't set well with anyone under thirty—or under ninety for that matter—whose earthly existence isn't so bleak that he has nothing to lose by looking forward to a cataclysmic upheaval.

I will be blunt—no matter how one intellectually acquiesces to the idea that, shortly, the world will indeed be coming to an end, one is haunted by the notion that something will be missing—that a given amount of the experience of life simply will never be realized.

Another point a younger person finds hard to understand is the apparent *eagerness* of one's elders to want to believe the end is imminent. One recoils at what might be called the "medieval" syndrome: the tendency to put all one's hopes on some afterlife because life now is so bleak.

The net effect is to predispose a person against a church which proclaims that the end is near.

The problem is that how one feels about truth doesn't change it. Individuals can go into an apoplectic rage against the sum of $2 + 2$, but it is still 4, no matter how hard that fact is to swallow.

Or, to be more specific, *if* the world really is coming to an end, sulking about the fact isn't going to change anything.

It ultimately is the problem of the "universe," of objective reality: I

may not like it, but there it is, staring me in the face. I may have no appreciation for smog, nuclear weapons, or high crime rates, but there is nothing I *personally* can do to make them go away. They are facts which have to be lived with.

It's the same way with the Church. It really has no choice: it must be true to itself, and if it believes that God Himself said for it to collectively say certain things, it must say them come "hell or high water."

The More Things Change . . . Personally, I'm not at all impressed with the world bequeathed to my generation by the one which went before it: a world of inflation, communism, terrorism, and the threat of nuclear war.

Why did it have to be *my* generation which grew up under the shadow of the bomb? . . . which was handed a world with about as much stability as nitroglycerin? . . . which got the privilege of living in a time of potential holocaust?

The problem is that my own words remind me of the sentiments of twenty-three-year-old John Franklin Carter who wrote: "The older generation . . . certainly pretty well ruined this world before passing it on to us. They gave us this Thing, knocked to pieces, leaky, red-hot, threatening to blow up. . . ."

Carter wrote those words at the beginning of the 1920s. My sentiments exactly. Yet I can't escape the fact that Carter's generation only managed to make the world, on the net, worse, and I can't conceive of my own generation doing any better.

In other words, the mess the world is in is a function of the nature of man and the universe, and not the antics of one or two particular generations which just managed to uniquely botch things up.

True, I am a little older than most teenagers today (four years!) and sometimes the gap seems more like eons. My own generation created the historical debris known as the 1960s: we were the "perfect generation" idolized by the media and politicians, infallible, the ones who would ban the bomb, end the Vietnam war, and fight for the civil rights of black people. Remember the idealism of the early sixties? It's gone. Gone like so much old brown grass. It was killed by the reality of human society—the nature of man.

The world just wasn't ready for Camelot. Yet.

There it is again. The dark figure with the hood and the long, bony finger pointing at you: reality, depressing reality, which won't go away, even though you would like it to.

After Camelot vanished, the Vietnam war refused to go away, and poverty stubbornly resisted its abolition by Lyndon Johnson. The creeping realization set in: we live in an imperfect world, a world in which progress was sticky. Cold. Cruel. Not the sort of place one would like to live in.

My own generation learned its lesson. So did the one just younger. In response to an imperfect, unfortunate world, both generations immersed themselves in a Philosophy known as "existentialism": live for the moment, the "NOW" generation. The idea was that nothing makes any difference but the immediate moment—the NOW. Since the universe is one chaotic mess, one must concentrate on immediacy.

Ah, but there must be something beyond. Life can be fun, but can be rather fragile also: it doesn't take much to end it. And, however life is lived, it is terminal: "one thing happens to them all" (Eccl. 2:14).

But there is something beyond the chaotic physical mess in which the world finds itself. And it is the duty of religion—true religion—to reveal that something.

If the world is in chaos, then it is the duty of the true Church of God to tell the world what it knows to be the way out: the return of Jesus Christ.

... The More They Stay the Same. Back to the uniqueness of our generations. I'll be blunt. The return of Christ is "inconvenient," to say the least. There *are* all sorts of things I'd like to do in the meantime, some of which I will in all probability never get to do.

But here's where perspective comes in. While the typical American middle-class teenager has many positive things to look forward to, given the indefinite continuity of this "present evil world," most people in that world, particularly the Third World, don't. For them, grinding poverty is a permanent lot. Furthermore, what about the personal tragedies even in our affluent society: crippling sickness, accident, suicide; the private dramas which take place because the world is the way it is—without Christ.

It comes down to this: Christ's return may cut short my life the way I'd like to live it out physically—but for *most of the world* any change would be blessed relief. After all, if the world is ever going to be straightened out by a divine miracle, somebody's generation is going to have to be "inconvenienced."

One of the literary fads when I was in high school was the *Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien. A passage speaks very eloquently to our generations: "I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I." Gandalf answers, "and so do all who live to see such times. But

that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time given us."

And what shall we do with "the time that is given us"? Waste it? Gandalf's words echo those of the apostle Paul: "... Redeem the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16).

Yes, the days *are* evil. And short. Which is all the more reason not to squander them.

"The Present Distress." Now I'm really going to be blunt. *The* most haunting image that dogs young people who accept the biblical strictures against fornication is the specter of never experiencing a sexual relationship.

It is as if one were caught in a vise: God prohibits sex until marriage and then proceeds to end the world *before* one can get married. It just doesn't seem fair.

Bear with me for a moment, and I think I can demonstrate that such fears are largely unnecessary.

This is because they apply only to select age groups: those few who are old enough to be baptized into the family of God but not mature enough to marry. Those who are younger, and who are trying to live by God's law, could live over into the time of the millennium and be married then. Those who are older and not married would be in that condition regardless of how far away Christ's return is.

Here's the clincher. An individual who isn't prepared to face the *possibility* of never marrying because Christ might return, really isn't prepared to be baptized anyway.

God really is fair and he hasn't plotted to deny this generation what he provided for all the others.

When Life Throws You Lemons . . . Make lemonade. One can look exclusively at what might have been, and which possibly won't be, and proceed to

develop a great cosmic funk. But this ignores the good side of the coin, the unique positive opportunities.

Our generations have the opportunity to physically escape the holocaust which threatens to cut short our physical lives.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of God's supernatural protection on those who "sigh and cry" for the abominations around them (Ezek. 9:4).

Solomon pointed out that God would not permit the righteous to famish (Prov. 10:3), while, most importantly, God promises direct protection for His Church in the time of the great tribulation (Rev. 12:14).

In the meantime, life can be fun. There's nothing in the Bible against sports, games, hobbies, music, cars, friends or clothes. True, there are some limitations on the use of some things (the Bible does condemn drunkenness, for example), but God never intended that we become monks and withdraw to monasteries where we could afflict ourselves all day because God is in some way pleased by our pain.

"Rejoice. O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccl. 11:9).

Granted, our generation may never get the opportunity to live out full physical lives. Still, there are better things to do in the meantime than mope around all day, contemplating our navels, transfixed at what could have been. It would be better to focus one's attention on what could be. As long as we're here, we might as well make the best of it.

Regards,
Jeff Calkins

One of our editors invited a group of teenagers to express their thoughts and feelings about growing into adulthood in these complicated and troubled times. He asked them to openly, honestly, and anonymously write down whatever was on their minds, including their gripes and problems. Below are edited excerpts from their replies, plus letters from other young people who have written to us. The staff has commented on some sensitive points.

Hair

People have the idea that individuals who have long hair are no-good, lazy bums. My parents think that just because a guy has long hair and "hippie" clothes that he is dumb, but nine times out of ten they're wrong.

I think people expect more of us than they ought to. They see our hair getting a bit over our ears and they say to themselves, "If I had scissors I would give the kid a haircut."

Sex

I know this is a great problem. All the kids at school brag about their experiences until you get to believing it's the thing to do.

Parental Criticism

It seems whenever any guy pays the least bit of attention to me, my parents, especially my mother, go off on tantrums trying to keep us apart.

My neighbor across the street is only in her early twenties and all the girls in my family confide in her about everything. She's a very good listener. She is helping me to understand my mom a little better. (My mother and I do not get along very well.) My neighbor tells me I'm like my mother in many ways, which upsets me greatly. I know what I want to be like and my mom isn't it! Perhaps it's because she's always arguing with dad in front of us and she's always yelling at us. She had turned me against marriage almost completely before I started liking my boyfriend. I talked to him about it and my neighbor too. I decided just because my mother wasn't happily married was no reason for me not to be.

Most teens I know have actually thought seriously about leaving home, because the parents constantly nag, gripe and complain. They never compliment you, but always get on you. I realize this is partly the teens' problem but I think time should be taken to iron the problems out!

My parents are always comparing me to other people and pointing out my bad points instead of expressing their thanks for my good points.

I dread my mother's coming near me because she usually starts criticizing me. She's been gone for a week and I've never felt so truly happy for such a long period of time in years.

Communication

We need to make more parents aware of our gripes and how we (both parents and teenagers) can eliminate the problems together.

As teenagers we need to feel that someone has a personal interest in us. I personally think that parents are at fault in some ways. They are trying to push instead of guide.

I would like to see maybe a series of articles on the subject of teens. I hope you can help me and the other young people that are having problems.

We teens need encouragement; we need communications, just talk sessions. You know, when there's nobody around you get lonely. And when you're lonely just for someone to talk to, you go anywhere you can find someone.

I am happy, though it may not sound like it, because I know what's ahead and where I'm going. I'm happy there are people like you around to listen and help. Those articles that have been written for teenagers are the greatest thing we can receive from your magazine. I only wish there could be a lot more.

Overprotectiveness

My gripe is that I am treated like a little kid. My father is very much overprotective. Being the oldest and a girl makes my father more overprotective than if I were a boy.

I'm fifteen years old and a junior in high

school. As you can see, I'm two or three years ahead. This presents quite a problem. My father has decided that I cannot date until I turn eighteen. When I graduate I'll be sixteen. I've read *The Missing Dimension in Sex* book and about this time I find I'm supposed to be what an adult would consider a "little know-it-all." If that's what I am, then there lies my whole problem. But I don't feel I should have to wait till I'm eighteen to date, especially since I'll graduate before then and half of my friends can date already.

- *First of all, you should have an attitude of respect for your parents' wishes. "Honor your father and mother" is the fifth commandment. Our parents may not always be right, but they still brought us into this world and are entitled to our loyalty.*

Sometimes parents just need a little more education. Solving these situations may require some patient explaining on the part of teens. Don't sell parents short. They may listen.

Nonetheless, a parent's main goal should be to prepare his children to take on adult responsibilities and make wise decisions on their own. If parents have done their job well, they'll be able to gradually allow their teens more and more responsibility for their own lives as they get older. But children and teenagers are individuals and mature at different rates. Some are grown up enough to be trusted at twelve; others will mature later.

Christ's parents trusted Him enough at age twelve to allow Him to travel alone on an out-of-town trip (see Luke 2:41-51). They didn't worry until they hadn't heard from Him for three days. It may be argued that Mary and Joseph lived in different times than we do today, but their actions cannot by any means be termed "overprotective." Of course, Jesus had undoubtedly demonstrated His maturity and sense of responsibility to them over and over again by His actions. The fact remains that Joseph and Mary weren't afraid to trust Him even in this unusual situation.

The main point we can glean from this example is that parents should be willing to trust their children. Children will probably behave just the way their parents expect them to. If there is parental doubt and distrust, children will tend to say, "I've got the name anyhow—why not go ahead and act like they expect me to?"

If a mother or father is constantly sus-

LETTERS FROM TEENAGERS

picious of a girl's actions on dates—cross-examining her and demanding a blow-by-blow account of how she spent her time—she may be doubly tempted to “have some fun” since she’ll be grilled upon her return no matter how well she behaves. On the other hand, if parents expect their kids to behave well, and express their trust openly, chances are those kids will act as their parents would have them act.

A mother or father who has taken time to properly instruct their teens and build a warm relationship with them are in a great position to gauge when that teen is responsible enough to be trusted to spend time away from home with a friend or friends. This might be earlier or later than his brothers or sisters or the rest of his peer group. But to arbitrarily set an age (“You can’t date until you’re eighteen”) can be very unwise. It fails to take into account a teen’s possible earlier maturity and development of a sense of responsibility.

Letting go—trusting a son or daughter to not “depart out of the way” they’ve been taught—is one of the most difficult things a parent has to learn how to do. But this is part of the growth process. If control is not relinquished gradually and wisely, a child may feel forced to “cut the apron strings” in a more drastic and unpleasant fashion.

Changed Life

There was a time not long ago when I was very unhappy. I went from pills and smoking to near suicide. I became hard and cold to all others. I really hurt the ones I loved.

Somenow I finished my eleventh year in school and quit my job. I took a Greyhound bus to Oregon and stayed with a family I know. There I repented. Once I was willing to listen and learn about God, I became happy and I wanted to help others understand which way was really the right way.

I have many friends who smoke, get

We have available a very informative publication on the subject of venereal disease. Simply write to us for your free copy of “The Silent Epidemic.”

drunk, take drugs, steal, have sex and much more. They think they have nothing to lose, so why not? I myself can’t convince them that what they do is wrong and I’m not saying I’m a holy perfect person, because I know I’m not. But can’t they see and learn from the mistakes of others?

Rock Music

It came as quite a blow to the majority of teens in our church when we were told to stop listening to rock music. Most all of us have listened to it since we were old enough to turn the radio on. We really feel no incentive to stop.

• *Some people find certain types of music depressing or unpleasant, and it would make good sense for them to avoid that type of music. Also, some electronically amplified live bands play their music so loud it damages the ears, at least temporarily and sometimes permanently.*

Different cultures appreciate different forms of musical expression. The criterion by which we judge music is a very subjective one: Is it enjoyable to us? Does it uplift us or make us feel good? Or does it appeal to our “lower” feelings

and desires, causing us to want to do wrong things? Any such music should be avoided.

Loneliness

I have written on various occasions for information about the Sabbath. The literature I received was excellent, as far as it went. I find that you direct most of your attention to the problems for adults, and rightly so. But I would appreciate very much more articles that deal with the problems of young people and, specifically, advice on how to deal with the problems a teen faces in trying to be a Christian.

I would like very much to become a Christian, and it is not the “crowd-bucking” that I mind. It is the loneliness. I feel overwhelmed, and although I know I must overcome these obstacles, there is simply no one I can turn to for help, no one with which to share the Sabbath. It is very lonely. Please help.

• *If you are interested in meeting other young people who are trying to obey God and who attend Sabbath services at their local congregation of the Worldwide Church of God, please write to the address of our office nearest you.* □

If You’d Like to Know More

Many hundreds have written asking if we have representatives in their local areas to counsel with them personally and to answer their questions.

The answer is yes, we do.

The Worldwide Church of God stations personal representatives (most are ordained ministers) in the United States and British Commonwealth and many other areas of the world. These local ministers will visit you, if invited, directly in your own home.

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses and phone numbers are as follows:

• United States: P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123 (or simply dial this toll-free number in the

continental U.S.: 1-800-423-4444. In California, Alaska and Hawaii call 213-577-5225 collect).

- United Kingdom, Europe, India and Africa: P.O. Box 111, St. Albans, Herts., England (or dial this number in U.K.: Radlett [092 76] 2670).
- New Zealand and Pacific Isles: P.O. Box 2709, Auckland 1, New Zealand (or dial Auckland 686-114—reverse the charges).
- Australia: P.O. Box 202, Burleigh Heads, Queensland 4220 (or dial this number: 075-35-4233—reverse the charges).
- Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2M2
- South Africa: P.O. Box 1060, Johannesburg 2000 (or dial this number: 011-216406).