



"There is a time when we must firmly choose the course we will follow, or the relentless drift of events will make the decision for us."

—Herbert V. Prochnow

24-Oct-03

## Grow Up!

*The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. . . . So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of [wisdom](#) . ([Psalm 90:10](#), 12)*

It has become increasingly apparent to many who watch our culture that the age of maturity for the present young adult generation has climbed to about 30 years. The age of maturity used to be somewhere between 18 and 21—between graduation from high school and the legal drinking age—but it has steadily risen past college graduation to the threshold of a person's fourth decade of life.

The country has seen far more young adults living with their parents well beyond their college years. These same people are postponing marriage, preferring "relationships" that are free of commitment and responsibility. Employers find them undependable and rootless, willing to trade a steady paycheck for a night on the town.

These young adults grew up under the heaviest media onslaught in history, which continues today. Constant commercials, television programs, and movies have preached the doctrine of fun and irresponsibility throughout their lives. Beer commercials encourage incessant good times in the forms of parties, sporting events, and chic tropical beaches. In the main, TV and movies portray college-aged people as fashionable extroverts, carefree daredevils, or clueless pleasure-junkies. The message in, for instance, *Legally Blonde*, is that a young lady can successfully earn a degree at even the most prestigious of law schools and win high-profile criminal cases if she dresses fashionably and reads beauty magazines. The kids who are serious about their studies and careers are degraded as nerds and out of touch.

The icons of the young adult crowd set the pace. Highly visible athletes like Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Derek Jeter, and Jeremy Shockey bank upon their reputations of enjoying the nightlife, sending the not-so-subtle message that the pinnacle of success is capped by alcohol, dancing, and loud music. Not to be outdone are male and female singers who stretch the bounds of decency in their efforts to promote the counter-culture with its immorality and rebellion. Cinema and television stars of this age group do little to raise standards.

As in times past, we could blame this on reckless teenage rebellion against the standards of their parents. However, this facile excuse does not work in this case. First, these are not teenagers, and second, the standards of their parents in the '60s and '70s were little better! Much of the blame rests with these twentysomethings' parents, who instilled in their children neither a sense of responsibility nor a desire for adult life. In fact, the whole society has been geared to perpetuating the cult of youth.

In ancient Israel, the age of accountability was 20, the year a young man could join the army ([Numbers 1:2-3](#)). Levites, who managed the critical duties of the Tabernacle and later the Temple, entered service at the age of 30 ([Numbers 4:2-3](#); 23; 30, 35, 39, 43), which was also the age at which [Jesus](#) began His ministry ([Luke 3:23](#)). It was expected that at sometime in a man's third decade, he would settle down, marry, begin a family, and function as a member of the community. By the time he was 30, he was considered mature enough to take on the most important tasks of Israelite society.

It could be argued that we live in a different age, but that is in the end a vacuous argument. Modernity has not changed mankind's life as much as we think. We are still born, grow up, marry, reproduce, rear children, age, and die as the ancients did. The big questions of life are still the same. We must still relate to parents, siblings, spouses, children, friends, employers, authorities, and the public as men always have. We still answer to the same [God](#).

As [Moses](#) wrote in Psalm 90, our lifespan is still only 70 or 80 years, and that passes by in a flash. If we fail to mature before 30, we have wasted more than a third of our life on things that matter little or detract from God's grand scheme. Paul enjoins us, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" ([Ephesians 5:15-16](#)). There is no time to waste.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Make Sure of Your Focus \(1998\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The watchman responsibility as defined in Ezekiel 33:2 and Isaiah 62:6, consists of both physical and spiritual aspects. Part of the pastor's responsibility is to carefully observe economic, social, meteorological, and political trends, warning the flock to take prudent precautions, including making a prayer offensive, making careful and thoughtful self-examination, actively repenting, submitting to God, looking to God's providence for a possible way of escape, but realizing that the place of safety has conditions attached to it. The exact standards of qualification for a Philadelphian have been left purposely vague to keep the prod to spiritual growth fairly intense. Our focus should be to seek God's kingdom, reciprocating God's love, committing ourselves to a life of service fulfilling His purpose for us, doing so without complaining, or comparing our lot with others, realizing He will supply exactly what we need.

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Time and Life](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The way men and God look at time and life are very different. But if we come to understand God's perspective, we have a greater chance of living His way!

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