

Accountability

Taking Responsibility for Our Actions

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As I begin, I want to make sure that all the young people in the church are listening to this sermon because, in the main, this sermon is aimed at them. It does not exclude the older members of the church, especially their parents. I want the parents of those who have older teenagers or young adults to be listening also, but the main thrust will be at those who are just beginning, or about to begin their adult lives.

In the past three or four months we have heard a handful of sermons on "the world," and how we are to approach it as Christians, and I think it has been eye-opening for very many to see the stark reality of the great difference between God's way and the world's way, and never the twain shall meet. I think that over the past year we have come to a far deeper understanding of the spiritual war between and the contrary beliefs and practices of the church and the world. There is hardly any area or ground where they meet. I saw in my sermons on "The Parables" how there is a battle out there, and Jesus says *Choose your side*. And then we have the young people who are caught between the two—one foot in each.

Most of our kids are not antagonistic in any way toward the church. They have been brought up in it. They believe the things that have been taught in it, and they have learned. They just do not see any future in it. They have been scattered to the four winds. They think that finding a wife or a husband is hopeless. We do not get together with thousands of people at the Feast anymore where you are likely to have several hundred children and maybe several dozen that are their age. They do not have a church college to go to anymore. They do not have a church summer program to go to anymore. A few of the churches have something, but it is not on the scale that it was just ten or twelve years ago, and the church is not very exciting, at least to their point of view. They do not have any activities to do, or very few of them, like volleyball and basketball and softball, camping trips, dances and the like—those kind of things that would be designed for them normally.

And *Oh! The adults are so **boring** to talk to. All they talk about is religion.* According to them, (and I include myself in this because at thirty-two I am an old hoary-headed man) they think we adults do not have any idea what the real world is like, or what they are going through. Our heads are stuck in the clouds. We are old and stuck in the mud. We are not cool. We are not hip. We are not "in." We dress funny. (I wonder if they have looked in the mirror lately.) We have never experienced what they are going through, so

our advice has no weight for them. The world has changed, according to them.

How close am I, parents, to what your teenagers say to you? I do not think I am very far off, because I have heard some of the conversations that the parents have with each other about their kids, and believe me kids, they do talk about you because they are concerned. They want to figure out what they need to be doing in this time. They want to see their children happy and successful, but above all they want to see their kids in the church and developing a personal relationship with their God, and your God. The last thing they want to see is their children turning their backs on the church, to take their lumps in the world. All their restrictions, all their talking, all their needling and trying to get you to do one thing or another is based on their love for you, and they do not want you to hurt.

So today this is what we are going to talk about. What is God's perspective on our youth's present dilemma? Not just what your parents think, but what does *God* think? How does *God* look at this today?

I want to say at the top of this that I do not have any pat quick-fix, one-size-spitball answer. I do not think anybody does. I am not going to stand up here and wave a wand and say "hocus-pocus" or "abracadabra" and solve your problems for you, because each situation requires a different solution. But what I do have for you today is an approach, a perspective that might be helpful to incorporate into your thinking as you work through the problem. In many respects perspective, approach, attitude, however you want to put it, is the most important factor in solving *any* problem that you might have, especially when you are talking about God's perspective, and often when you have the right perspective the dilemma that you are facing may just have that solution pop up right at you. When you look at a dilemma from the right angle, the solution sometimes appears obvious.

Now let us first get some background on this situation, the dilemma itself, some details about the scattering, about the "famine of the word" that maybe we have not emphasized before, but when I go through this I do not think you are going to be surprised. I think you are going to say *I should have seen that*. Let us first go to Lamentations 1. We have been doing a lot of preaching out of the book of Lamentations over the past couple of years because it fits. It is the book that tells us what is going on in the church of God. As we read these verses, remember that it is "Zion" speaking. It is personified "church" in a way.

Lamentations 1:12-16 Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has been brought on me, which the LOORD has

inflicted on me in the day of His fierce anger. From above He has sent fire into my bones, and it overpowered them; He has spread a net for my feet and turned me back; He has made me desolate and faint all the day. [It is constant. You never get away from it.] The yoke of my transgressions was bound; they were woven together by His hands, and thrust upon my neck. He made my strength fail; the Lord delivered me into the hands of those whom I am not able to withstand. The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah. For these things I weep; my eye, my eye overflows with water; because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me.

Now look at this very next line.

Lamentations 1:16-18 My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed. Zion spreads out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her; the LORD has commanded concerning Jacob that those around him become his adversaries; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them. The LORD is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment. Hear now, all peoples, and behold my sorrow; my virgins and my young men have gone into captivity.

How about that? In one sense you may say that our kids, our young men and our virgins are the ones taking the brunt of this punishment. Not all of it, but who seems to be having the hardest time of it? You know, "young men," "maidens," "children," as it says there in verse 16, they are the ones least prepared to handle adversity. They do not have the knowledge, they do not have the understanding, they do not have the wisdom or the experience to make the proper decisions. They are also the ones that have the most emotional reactions to these things because they do not have the wisdom and the experience to approach the problems calmly as an adult might, because the adult has graduated from the university of "hard knocks." The children, the young men, and the maidens are getting it "in the teeth"

Let us go to Ezekiel chapter 9. Many of you will recognize this when I tell you that it is the "marking" chapter—those being marked as God's people at the end.

Ezekiel 9:1-2a Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, Let those [meaning angels] who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north. . .

This is Jerusalem we are talking about as a type of the church.

Ezekiel 9:2b-6 . . . each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side: and the LORD said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it. To the others He said in my hearing, Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary. So they began with the elders who were before the temple.

This is what is happening in the church in anti-type, you may say. Those who are God's people are being marked, set apart from the rest; but those who continue to commit iniquity are slain without pity. In other words, you might want to put it in "Pauline" language, "they are delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." That's what Paul uses in I Corinthians 5:5. He uses it in terms of disfellowshipment. But what are we **going** through? This is disfellowshipping directly from God as He separates the church into little pieces. God's punishment, you see there in verse 6, falls without distinction upon young men, maidens, and little children as well as their parents, and grandparents, and the ministers. Kids have not escaped from this unscathed.

Let us go to Amos 8. I bet you would not expect to find it in Amos, but it is. I was kind of shocked when I saw this. I should not have been. In Amos 8:11 is the famous well-known verse that talks about the famine of the word.

Amos 8:11-13 Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it. [Now look at this next verse.] In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst.

Whom did Amos pick out to say were the ones who were going to be affected by this problem? The strong young men and the fair virgins. And then he says:

Amos 8:14 Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, who say, As your god lives, O Dan! And, As the way of Beersheba lives! They shall fall and never rise again.

The young people faint from thirst. They cannot seem to find any nourishment. Amos shows the ones who show the worst effects of the famine are the young people. This is

very similar to what Lamentations says. I read verse 14 because I wanted to include the certainty that trying to find the answers in the world or in other religions brings a far worst punishment. In the prophetic language here, this sounds to me like eternal death, and at the very least, a physical one. It says here "They shall never rise again." That is very sobering is it not, that though the young people take the brunt of it, they are not going to find any solace in the world. If they are seeking in the world to find answers, it may be the ruin of them, and that is sobering. But there are other points about that which we will get to later.

So what *should* young people be doing at this time? The same thing the adults are supposed to be doing. Just as they are part of the problem and participants in the punishment, they are also part of the solution.

Let us go back to Lamentations 3. This is a long prayer by Jeremiah. We are going to break in on verse 25. He is giving part of the solution here.

Lamentations 3:25-27 The LOORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LOORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.

I have always thought that was an interesting addition. Why is it stuck right in here, because it just seems to be in a way a thought that is out of the flow? But it is not, because listen to what he says that you need to do. This is still talking about the youth.

Lamentations 3:28 Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him.

This punishment is from God.

Lamentations 3:29 Let him put his mouth in the dust. [Humble yourself.] There may yet be hope [if you do].

Lamentations 3:30 Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, [turn the other cheek. take your lumps] and be full of reproach. [Know your sins.]

Lamentations 3:31 For the Lord will not cast off forever. [There is hope.]

Lamentations 3:32-33 Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

We forced Him to do this. It is not in His will to grieve us, cause us pain, to make us go through this, but we forced Him. It had reached an end, and this is the punishment.

Lamentations 3:40-42 Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD; let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven. We have transgressed and rebelled; [and] you have not pardoned.

The reason He has not pardoned is because we have not repented. So the punishment continues. What we see here is that the young men and the fair virgins have to examine themselves too. They have to examine their ways too, and then turn back to God.

Young people, you do not **dare** think that it was your parents' sins alone that caused the church to get into this mess. I am sure there are many adults in this church who could tell you some horror stories about some of the perversions that occurred in Y.O.U. activity, at Feast times among the youth, at S.E.P. It was not just the adults. You know very well. You young people talk to each other. You write letters to each other. You know there are some young folk among us who have serious problems with alcohol, with drugs, with sex, with stealing, with lying, with dishonoring their parents, with breaking the Sabbath. Need I go on? Problems have not gone away in some cases. Do you think that God takes no notice of the sins of children and the young people? Do you think that God just glosses over the sin of our youth?

Let us go to Ecclesiastes 11. This, in a way, is the keystone of my entire sermon. This is what I built the entire sermon upon. In Ecclesiastes 11:9 everything revolves around this principle.

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.

Utter futility; worthless, or however you want to translate vanity. A passing of the wind. As young as you may be, whether you are a child or a teen or a young adult, if you can understand what I am saying, **you are held accountable for this knowledge and all your words and your actions**. Did you catch that? If you can understand what I am saying, you are held accountable for them. God will bring you into judgment for **all these things**. Whatever you do, whatever you say, God knows, and He will call you on the carpet and ask you, *Why did you do this?* Or He will spank your little fanny in punishment. You are not getting away with anything, even if mom and dad do not know.

Even if mom and dad never find out, God knows, and you will be paying the piper if you do not repent of them and turn your life around. We are talking about **accountability** here.

Paul speaks of this same principle in Romans 14:12. He tells the church there in Romans 14:12, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." This is not just an Old Testament principle. This goes all the way through the Bible. If you want to do a study on accountability, you will find verses all through the Bible. We are *all* accountable. We are *all* responsible for our actions. Accountability means that each individual is ultimately responsible for his actions; not your parents, not your friend, not your peer group, not your school, not your job, not your employer, not society, not Satan—**you!**

You cannot pass the buck when it comes to your own words and deeds. They are yours. It means that you are **personally** answerable to God. Your parents may be the most righteous couple in the entire church, but that means **nothing** when it comes to your judgment. In fact it could very well be a strike against you, because you had their good example all your life. It says in Ezekiel 14, "Were Noah, Daniel, and Job here, they could not save you."

Ezekiel 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness, says the Lord God.

It says elsewhere that "the soul that sins, it shall die." How many different ways can I say it? Each one of us is *personally* accountable for our actions.

Let us go back to Ecclesiastes 11:9 and look at these for a second. Notice that Solomon gives the young person permission to have fun.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.

He says, "Rejoice." "Have fun." "Have a cheerful heart." He goes on to say, "Walk in the ways of your heart." It says, "Follow your heart's impulses." The parents are probably saying, "Don't say that!" "Don't say that!" But that is what Solomon says. He says, "Go ahead. Follow your heart's impulses." And then he says, "In the sight of your eyes." Do what you see is best, . . . *but!* Have fun. Follow your heart. Do what you think is best, **but** know that you are going to be held accountable for everything you say and do! **Follow God's law!** Have your fun, but do it within the bounds of God's law. I do not know if I could say it more strongly. "Narrow is the way, and straight is the gate," but you had

better be between those two ways, or you are not having the type of fun, you are not having the cheerful heart that Solomon says you can have.

The church, God's way of life, can be fun. Most young people's idea of fun is simply perversion. It is Satan's mind telling you *This is fun*, and then you get his pitchfork in your back because you have broken God's law, and it comes automatically. God does not have to strike you down with a lightning bolt. God's law comes without **need** for Him to do anything. It is automatic. "You break it, it breaks you," we used to say, and it is the truth. Your parents do not have to punish you. You are going to get it all by yourself if you break God's law.

Notice what he says there in verse 10. It is a summary statement. "Go ahead, remove sorrow from your heart. Go ahead, have your yuk-yuks and your laughs. Have your jollies, guys. Go ahead and do all those things that you wanted to do. Have a great time. Have your adventures. See the world. Get your education. Make strong friendships, **but** put away evil from your flesh."

Solomon knew the drives that are in young people. Do not do anything wrong while you are having your fun, because ultimately those years do not mean anything unless you are building a relationship with God. If this is all just physical to you, then they are just wasted times, but if you put God first, if you follow the straight and narrow way, and you have your fun within God's law, then these years will be profitable for you and your wife, or husband, and your children, and your parents, and you will give them a great reward for their labors.

So have fun. Do what you think is best. Follow your heart, but do it all within God's law, or face the consequences. Once you marry and have children and get a responsible job, life will automatically settle down into a more placid and comfortable pace. So if you are going to have your jollies, do it before you get married, but do it within the law, and you know what? If you do it that way, then it will **truly** be fun, and there will be no harmful side effects and no painful repercussions. Do it right the first time. You will thank yourself for the rest of your life, and you will thank your parents for teaching you for the rest of your life.

Now maybe you are thinking, "I'm just a teenager. God surely doesn't require this of me yet." Oh yeah? Let us go to Jeremiah 1. God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations while he was yet a teenager.

Jeremiah 1:6 Then said I: Ah, Lord Good! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.

This is a classic! Listen to God's reply. I want to put the emphasis on here so you can hear it the way I hear it.

Jeremiah 1:7-8a But the LOORD said to me: Do not say, 'I am a youth' ["I'm just a kid"], for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces. . .

Do not be afraid of their faces. Do not be afraid of your peer group, saying that you are weird. Do not think that your friends will think that you are not cool.

Jeremiah 1:8b . . . For I am with you to deliver you, says the LOORD.

Who needs those people? If they cannot take your religion, if they cannot take it that you want to be moral, tell them to go away and do not come back, because you have **God** on your side. If they are saying that to you, they are not the kind of friends you need. You had better start running with a different group.

Now I know those are painful words for many of you because you love your peer group. You want to be "cool." You want to wear all the right do-dads, get your body shot full of holes wearing earrings or whatever. You want to wear those stupid looking clothes. You want to get your hair done in all these new styles because it's "in," and "I'm cool." Remember, Solomon said, it is **vanity**. It is meaningless. It is worthless, and it gets you nowhere with the only One whom you need on your side—God. It is an idol, guys.

Listen to what I am saying, please. Do not give up eternity for an earring or a tattoo or for a hairstyle or for a fashion statement. You may say, "Oh! You're making too much of it." Uh huh. Do you know what those things say about you? **Rebellion! Rebellion! Here I come! I am a rebellious child!** *I will not live the way God says I should live. I am led around by the nose by all my friends.*

I am speaking frankly, because you need frankly spoken to. This is not a game. Life is not a game. Life is serious. Let us get into it and be sober. I do not mean alcohol sober. I mean sober-minded, serious about where we are in time, where we are in prophecy, and how **soon** everything could break, and we do not want to be on the outs with God when it happens. Jesus says in John 9:41, that because we understand, our sin remains until we repent of it and are forgiven. You older teenagers know. You understand. Crunch time is here. Follow through.

This next verse is a memory scripture for some.

Proverbs 20:11 Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure and right.

Each of you has a reputation, do you not? Do you know that God knows what your reputation is? He knows what you really are. He has to make a judgment just like we would have to make a judgment to know what a person's reputation is; even a **child**. Not just a young man or a fair virgin, but a child is known by whether he does good things or bad things. If he knows to do good or bad, then he is accountable for those things.

Is ignorance any excuse?

Proverbs 24:12 If you say, Surely we did not know this, does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?

If you claim to be ignorant, God knows whether you are actually ignorant or not, and He takes that into consideration when He judges. But you cannot fool God. I know all of you young people know the Ten Commandments. If you do not know them by rote, at least you know what they are. That means you are accountable, and God will make a righteous judgment whenever these situations occur.

Let us go to Ezekiel 18. I want you to see how fair God's judgment is here.

Ezekiel 18:26-29 When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, The way of the Lord is not fair. O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?

"You've got a screwy idea here if you think that My ways are unfair. I'm just giving to each man according to his deeds."

Ezekiel 18:30-32 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord GOOD. Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, says the Lord GOOD. Therefore turn and live!

Please understand what He is saying here. God is not against you in any way. He wants you to turn and live so He can give you the blessings. But if you disappoint Him, the punishment will come. God is fair. When someone repents, He is very pleased, and He wants you to put away your rebellious heart and take on a converted heart. It says it right there. "A new heart and a new spirit." He wants you to have a heart led by His Spirit. Now you might say, "Am I not too young to be converted?" Well, in this age it is really pretty rare that someone under about eighteen is ready for baptism, but baptism is only the outward sign of repentance and dedication to God. One can repent of sin at **any** age, whether you are baptized or not. One can learn the ways of God at **any** age, and children of believers (it says in I Corinthians 7:14), are sanctified. It says in my Bible that they are holy, set apart for a special purpose.

Some feel that this means that they are not cut off from God's Holy Spirit. In a way they have an automatic calling into His church. If this is so, then the Spirit of God works with the children, teens, and young people much more intimately than we may have thought. So no one is too young to begin trying to live like a converted Christian. I could go through a few examples of young people who turned to God at an early age—people like Joseph. I think maybe he was seventeen or eighteen when he was put in the pit by his brothers, and God immediately began to prosper him in Egypt. David was a young lad when he faced Goliath, and God had set him apart to be king. Jeremiah, like I mentioned before, was in his teens when God called him. Notice I Samuel 2:18 about the prophet Samuel.

I Samuel 2:18 But Samuel ministered before the LOORD even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.

He was conducting ministerial priestly duties while he was still a child. Now I do not know what he was doing. I am sure he was not preaching sermons, but he had already been dedicated to God, and he stuck by it all his life. It was not much long after this that God began **prophesying** through him. He foretold the fall of the house of Eli in chapter 3. In the sermonette today we heard about Josiah. I wanted to pick this up for those of you who were not here in Charlotte. In II Chronicles 34 I just want to pick up a few verses here about Josiah.

II Chronicles 34:1-3 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LOORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, [at 16 years old] while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. And in the twelfth year [20 years old by this time] he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images,

the carved images, and the molded images.

He was **on fire** for God by age 20! You are not too young. If you can understand what I am saying, you are not too young. I am going to read Mark 14:51 because I want you to see that it happens in the New Testament too. I will start with verse 43 because I want you to see the context here.

Mark 14:43 And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

They were in the Garden of Gethsemane here. Jesus is about to be arrested.

Mark 14:51-52 Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men [probably in this mob] laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

He even gave his **clothes** to follow Christ. This was probably Mark, the evangelist himself. We find later that God used him mightily. He wrote a book of the Bible, and he was with Peter and Paul and helped them in their ministries.

We could also go to the example of Timothy who was a young man who became baptized, and immediately began to work with Paul in his ministry. So you are not too young to start following God. This idea that you have to be older is a wrong one. You can dedicate yourself to God anytime, and you will not "miss out" either because there will be more joy in that than there will be in getting your jollies in the world.

If we can read between the lines in these accounts that we have just gone through, what did these young people do that others did not? Well, it is pretty simple I think. It has been **preached** to you consistently for the last several months. They put God first. The Josiah, king of Judah, put God first. If you think that he had his hands full doing other things you are probably right, but he put God first, and it became the foundation for his kingship, and he was blessed mightily. Some have said that he, had he not done something foolish at a little bit later date, may have been the greatest king that Judah ever produced, even beyond David, even beyond Hezekiah. He was a great man, and he started young.

These people made God their first priority in life, and once they ordered their life with God in first position, the rest just fell right into place. God used Samuel for years and years and years, and Joseph for nearly a hundred years. Do you want long life?

Dedicate yourself to God. It seems to work. If you are a good servant, He will use you until He has used all of you.

What this means is that their approach to life changed. Their perspective changed, and God added the rest—all the things they needed, because they did this.

We have been in Matthew 6 a lot recently and I do not want to steal any thunder from my Dad's sermon, but I want to touch on the promise here in verses 31 through 34.

Matthew 6:31-34 Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat or What shall we drink? Or What shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and [here is the promise] all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

These are not just words. They are the sure promises of God. Jesus Himself said these words. God says that if He sends out His Word, it does what He purposes it to do. It will not return to Him empty. These are sure iron-clad guarantees. Just like I mentioned before about God's law being automatic, this promise is automatic. You do what is right, you place God first, you seek His righteousness, and these things will come. You do not need to worry about it. If you test these, they will deliver. They work.

Our frustration about this dilemma in the church with the kids: I have come to the conclusion it is nothing more than worry, anxious thought, over-concern. We are doing exactly what Jesus said **not** to do. He said, "Don't worry about all these physical things, about you getting married, about you having a career. Get your priorities straight first, and these things will fall into place." Now, you have to do things. You have to make yourself presentable for being married. If you want a career, you have to do the things to get yourself into position to have that career. If you put God first, all of these things will be added to you. Like I said before, it is not hocus-pocus, but if you do your part and you put God first, then He will give you the things that you *need* first of all, and many of those things that you desire.

So what I think this is, when it comes right down to it, is that our worry over this situation is simple faithlessness. It may come as a shock, but I think it is. In a way it is accusing God, the great Sovereign of this universe, of doing our children harm, of warping their lives somehow, of abandoning them to this world. But it is not. He has done **none** of these things. If we can swallow it, He is doing what is best at this time for them. It is hard to swallow, but it is true. He is bringing **all of us** to repentance before it is too late.

He is getting all of our attention centered on Him for the time of the worst suffering, deception, destruction, and death this world has ever seen.

Do you not see God's love in this? If He did not jerk us up and say "Hey! Turn your attention to Me, because right over the horizon is a time when you're going to need Me more than ever. So work it out now. Put your faith in Me, and then we'll go forward." Not just to the parents, not just to the ministry, but to the children, the young men, and the maidens. We are all one big family, one big church. He wants us all to go forward.

Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Do you believe this promise? Do you have faith in it? Do you have faith in God that He can perform it? If you ask God for a husband or a wife when you make yourself suitable for marriage, do you think God is just going to flat-out deny you one? If you ask God for a good job or a career, and then you gain the knowledge and the skill you need for that field, do you think God is going to shut the door in your face? He is a much more loving Father than that. If you are keeping God's commandments, if you are putting Him first, He will be extremely pleased to give you all that you ask. He is not denying you anything. He just wants you to get first things first; God first, and the rest will be added to you.

Now young people, do you have reachable defined goals during this time? Have you written them down? Do you know where you want to go? Are you working toward them if you have them? Time did not stop here. We are not going back to the way it was in Worldwide. I do not care if there is never another Y.O.U. ever! Get it out of your mind that there is going to be some miraculous impulse for everybody in the church that was, to come back together and re-form the Worldwide Church of God as we knew it. "It's not going to happen," to quote George Bush. It is not going to happen.

Move forward in your life. Take the situation that has appeared to you and move forward. Have a goal. Have several goals. Work on them. This new temple is not the same as the glory of the old temple. Haggai says this. People wept and wept because Solomon's temple was so beautiful, and they had to build this little concrete block one. I am using modern terminology. Marble and precious stones versus concrete block and cement. It is not going to happen that way again. It is different times. We just have to

face reality and **live** in the "now." And most of all, having your goals and working toward them and gaining skills you need to have them happen, are you seeking God's help in making them a reality? Are you praying and studying? Are you putting Him first?

The age of accountability in this country is eighteen years. They try sixteen-year-olds in court as adults. In most states you can drink at age twenty-one. In many states it is eighteen. You can vote when you are eighteen. In ancient Israel they counted every man from twenty and upward. In Arab nations they circumcise their young men at thirteen, and they are considered men. They are not teenagers. They are not boys, they are men. The Jews do something similar. At age thirteen they have bar mitzvah. I do not know if you are aware of this, but bar mitzvah to a Jew ushers him into his time of moral, ethical, and religious accountability. **This is at age thirteen!**

Why have we in the church raised it so much higher? Why is it at twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-five, especially when God has said they are accountable since they have been able to understand it? Do not molly-coddle your children. That is what I am saying parents. When they are accountable, they are accountable. They have made their bed, they should sleep in it. This may sound hard, it may sound radical, but what you are doing is trying to shield them from God in many respects. I think most people think that they are trying to shield them from the world. There is a bit that a parent can do to do that, but there comes a point in time when, as it says in Genesis 2:24, that a man should leave his father and his mother. In that case it talks about getting a wife and creating his own family. The principle holds true.

There is a time when a child must break away from his parents. Just practically, you may need what is called "tough love" on your children. When they reach that age of accountability and they are not abiding by your house rules, give them the first month's rent and show them the door. They are accountable. It is time for them to face the real world. You do not need sin in your house, and if they are sinning and you know it, and they are continuing in it, show them the door. You have to be indomitable when it comes to right and wrong. Do not give in. You have to set the standard, or hold up the standard that God has set. Be tough. If they ask for your help, give it to them. But after they have broken away and started their own household, do not meddle in their lives. They are a new family, a new house, and they are accountable for their actions.

You might want to jot down Deuteronomy 21:18-21. I was going to go into this because I wanted to show you what I have just said is not as radical as it seems, because do you know what God said to ancient Israel to do? If they had a rebellious son, one whom they could not contain, they were to bring this son before the elders and they will stone him with stones until he died. Pretty radical do you not think? I think it is much more, would

you call it merciful?, to let them see the door? We are in the New Testament now. Things are a little bit different. But if they do not abide by your rules, they can go.

One more thing:

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Do you believe that you have trained up your child in the way he should go? Have you forgotten the second part, that if you have done your job it is going to make a difference? You can have faith, you can trust God that they will wake up to the fact someday that there is a better way—the one they learned in your house when they were younger. This may not be easy. I know you do not want to see your children have children out of wedlock, or get their driving privileges revoked, or wind up in jail, or end up living in sin, or whatever. You do not want to see them do that. But if you have faith in what God has taught, and what you have taught your children, then you can give your children back to God. Now what do I mean by that? Ezekiel 16 says that Israel bore children for Him.

Ezekiel 16:20 Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured.

Malachi 2, verse 15 says that He gives us children so He can have godly seed.

Malachi 2:15 He seeks godly offspring.

It says in Psalm 127 that children are an heritage of the Lord. It is a gift of God. Children are gifts of God to us for us to raise, and when they reach an age of accountability, we turn them back over into His care as a gift back to Him.

Psalm 127:3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD.

Peter says in I Peter 5, "Cast all your cares upon the Lord, for He cares for you." One of your cares has been your children. We can give our children back to God in the **surety** that He is going to do with them what He wants done with them, which will be the best thing for them.

Let us conclude in Philipians 1. I just want to take out the principle here. This is another memory scripture.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Now do you believe this in regard to your children? Do you believe that God has begun a good work in your children? Do you believe, do you trust Him enough to let Him do His work, let Him do His job, because He wants them there in His Kingdom just as much as He wants you?

The children, the young people, have to trust God to guide their lives and to do what is right. He has given us the way, and we have to walk in it in faith.

Parents, do you trust Him with your kids? Remember, I said this is a "faith" matter. Do you trust God? This is the perspective we need.