

## On Becoming an Independent, Responsible, Successful Adult

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

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

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

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

VIII. Parents make mistakes. However, young people:

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

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

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

8. The real issue is whether you even desire to *not* be a slave to your lusts.
  - a. If it is full liberty that you desire, you will never achieve it under the mastery of your own lusts. **PSA 119:45 c/w JOH 8:31-34.**
  - b. You don't have to play the world's game to be the liberated adult you desire to be (unless you insist on the false liberty of sin).
  - c. You can be a winner in life through godliness (**1TI 4:8 c/w MAT 6:33; 1PE 3:10-11**), holding fast integrity (**JOB 2:3 c/w PSA 26:8-12**), a standout like Noah, Daniel or Job (**EZE 14:14**), someone accepted of God and approved of men (**ROM 14:18**), bearing your own burden (**GAL 6:4-5**), able to build a good life without relying on a welfare check.
  - d. Long before you are given independence, you need to decide: what will I be, sinner or winner?
  
- X. Young people need a good foundation upon which to build a successful transition to adulthood. Note that the following particularly apply to *committed* believers.
  - A. The fear of God is a good foundation stone. **PRO 14:26; 19:23; 22:4.**
    1. It is the beginning of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. **PRO 1:7; 9:10.**
    2. (**PRO 8:13**) The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.
    3. The fear of God will save you from all manner of ill-fated decisions. **PRO 16:6; 14:27.**
    4. A recognition of the omnipresence and omniscience of God is vital. **HEB 4:13.**
      - a. Continually remind yourself that every thing you do is known to the living God Who is to be feared. **HEB 10:31.**
      - b. Regularly repeat, "Jesus Christ is always here, the unseen guest in every room, the silent listener to every word, and the reader of every thought."
    5. A holy fear of God will regulate your emotions and passions, animate your work ethic, circumcise your lips, prevent you from injuring others, save you from defilements, and advance you in this world while preparing you for the next.
  - B. The love of God is a good foundation stone. **MAR 12:30.**
    1. Our love of God is responsive to His love for us. **1JO 4:10, 19.**
      - a. Considering how undeserving we are of God's love and yet are its objects, we should out of gratitude love Him with all our being.
      - b. It is ungratefulness that accelerates the descent into vile corruption. **ROM 1:21-32.**
      - c. Ungratefulness towards God will spill over to ungratefulness to others, and this will have negative blowback in many ways in everyday life.
    2. The love of God is proved by obedience. **JOH 14:15.**
    3. The love of God is the only way to know if we truly love others. **1JO 5:2-3.**
    4. The pleasure of God should be a primary concern. **JOH 8:29 c/w HEB 13:20-21.**
      - a. This will make us serviceable to others. **ROM 15:1-3.**
      - b. By contrast, we read of those who "...please not God, and are contrary to all men" (**1TH 2:15**).
      - c. Successful adult life is very much dependent upon the triumph of selflessness over selfishness: normal people want to relate to, do business with, and trust the former rather than the latter.
  - C. Trust in God is a good foundation stone. **HEB 11:6; 1JO 5:4.**
    1. Scripture is filled with God's promises to those who trust Him: promises that are eternal and temporal, spiritual and material, blessings and chastenings.

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

- of paranoia that is locked only by yourself.
4. What you feed your mind will either feed your frustrations or your faith for overcoming (**1JO 5:4**). Remember **PHIL 4:8**.
  5. Young people would be better off reading substantive short works and novels with positive characters and themes rather than let any animated screen train their minds.
- XI. Think Biblically. Justify God's wisdom in all things. **PSA 119:128; ROM 3:4; LUK 7:35**.
- A. Prioritize what God prioritizes and the rest will fall into place. **MAT 6:24-34**.
1. Make God your first love. **MAT 22:36-37 c/w JER 9:23-24**.
  2. Honor God's Son. **JOH 5:22-23**.
    - a. honour: To hold in honour, respect highly; to reverence, worship; to regard or treat with honour or respect.
    - b. Do not take the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in vain. It is the name of *God manifest in the flesh* in which alone is salvation. **ACT 4:12**.
    - c. Do not dishonor Christ by calling Him Lord and willingly breaking His law. **LUK 6:46 c/w HEB 10:28-29**.
  3. Love your fellow man. **ROM 13:9**.
  4. Honor your parents. **EPH 6:1-4**.
  5. Honor civil powers. **TIT 3:1; 1PE 2:13-17**.
  6. Cultivate a good work and social ethic. **ROM 12:11; PRO 12:24**.
    - a. Be a producer, not a parasite. **2TH 3:10-12**.
    - b. Remember the genuinely poor. **EPH 4:28; JAM 2:15-16**.
  7. Be responsible with your resources. **PRO 27:23-24**.
    - a. Do not sacrifice the future on the altar of the immediate. **PRO 21:20**.
    - b. Avoid debt, especially pleasure debt. **ROM 13:8; PRO 22:7**.
    - c. Better to build a career before a house. **PRO 24:27**.
- B. Shun the messages of a carnal culture which are contrary to wholesome, biblical values.
1. Our culture celebrates the following as the good life:
    - a. fornication, lasciviousness, homosexuality.
    - b. filthy and abusive language.
    - c. drunkenness and recreational drugs.
    - d. solving conflicts with wrath and violence.
    - e. celebrity-ism, narcissism, exaltation of self.
    - f. disposable pregnancies and marriages.
    - g. covetousness of goods and persons.
    - h. immediate gratification.
    - i. debt.
    - j. winning is everything.
    - k. pleasure.
  2. The above are not the ways to the good life: they are the ways to shallowness, poverty, emptiness, regret, family and social dysfunction, and self-destruction.
  3. Peter sets forth a better way to the good life. **1PE 3:8-11**.
  4. Cultivate a holy hatred of evil (**ROM 12:9**): evil messages and influences from without and especially the evil within.
    - a. This will save you from much trouble.
    - b. This will keep God on your side. **1PE 3:12**.
    - c. This will approve you in the eyes of reasonable men (the only kind worth being approved by) and fit you for positions of trust and advancement in life.

- d. Jesus Christ's maturing put him in favor with God and man. **LUK 2:52.**
- 5. Boys especially should consider Jesus Christ the supreme model to follow. We are to be conformed to His image. **ROM 8:29; 1JO 3:2.**
  - a. Jesus was holy, harmless and undefiled. **HEB 7:26.**
  - b. Jesus was meek, lowly; He sought not man's glory. **MAT 11:29; JOH 5:44.**
  - c. Jesus was self-sacrificing. **JOH 10:15; 15:13.**
  - d. Jesus desired God's will and did it. **JOH 5:30; 8:29.**
  - e. Jesus was a man of authority. **MAR 1:22.**
  - f. Jesus controlled His spirit. **1PE 2:22-23.**
  - g. Jesus controlled His desires. **MAT 4:4.**
  - h. Jesus was a man of prayer. **MAR 1:35.**
  - i. Jesus was a man of faith. **HEB 2:13.**
  - j. If you are characterized by faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, you will be like Jesus and be a real man. **2PE 1:5-8.**
    - (1) virtue: 1. The power or operative influence inherent in a supernatural or divine being. Now *arch.* or *Obs.* 2. Conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality; voluntary observance of the recognized moral laws or standards of right conduct; abstention on moral grounds from any form of wrong-doing or vice.
    - (2) *Practical* virtue is not an airborne germ that you catch from others, nor is it genetic. It is a learned and employed trait.
- 6. The counter to this cultural battle for your minds is the gospel. **2CO 10:4-5.**
  - a. The gospel has power to save them that govern their minds by it. **1CO 15:1-2; 1TI 4:16.**
  - b. You CAN be saved from this *untoward* (unrestrained, unruly, perverse) *generation*. **ACT 2:40.**
  - c. Do you want to be saved from it?

XII. As Paul said, becoming an adult means putting away childishness. **1CO 13:11 c/w ECC 11:10.**

A. Consider the changes.

- 1. "I spake as a child."
  - a. Children tend to taunt their fellows who won't join with them in something. (**MAT 11:16-17**). A big part of maturing is accepting that everyone doesn't have to do what you like or want, and governing your mouth accordingly.
  - b. Children, through pride and/or lack of knowledge, tend to speak about things they know little or nothing about. Maturity speaks according to knowledge. **JOH 3:11; 8:38 ct/w JUDE 1:10.**
  - c. Tangent point: In **1CO 13:1, 8** *speaking* in tongues is considered as a relatively inferior form of Christianity. If speaking *legitimately* in tongues is in accord with speaking as a child, how much more childish is the *phony* tongues-speaking which is common in charismatic churches?
- 2. "I understood as a child." c/w **1CO 14:20.**
  - a. Children tend to be deficient in logical thought and they process the world through emotion and desire. **1CO 3:1-2.**
  - b. Sadly, too many people remain childish in this regard.
- 3. "I thought as a child."
  - a. Children tend to think that the world revolves around them, that somebody else should feed, clothe and house them, that money grows on trees, that

- good parents stifle their development, that they can play with fire and not get burned, that stuff and pleasure are the chief ends of life, etc. Maturity recognizes such thoughts as perilous. **2TI 3:1-4.**
- b. Children tend to think of the world in simple “black and white” terms which make decisions easy. Maturity realizes that there is a lot of gray in life where decisions have to be made based upon available information and discernment. **HEB 5:14.**
4. The context of **1CO 13:11** is a contrast of temporary things of earth with things that are eternal in the heavens.
    - a. Childhood is equated with the temporary things of earth.
    - b. Manhood is equated with eternal things and heaven which (until Christ returns) is only entered by death.
    - c. Maturity means focusing interests on heavenly things (**COL 3:2**), on values that are enduring.
    - d. Maturity also means coming to terms with one’s own mortality: you realize that you are not going to be supple, strong and invulnerable forever, that it is wise to consider that time is short (**EPH 5:19**), and that death is a reality to sober one’s mind to leave behind a good name. **ECC 7:1-4.**
- B. Maturity is virtually impossible to a little child and it won’t happen overnight or on a birthday. It is a process that comes through knowledge, application and experience. Young people do well to start training their minds in terms of mature things so as to develop mature outlooks on life before they gain independence. **PSA 144:12.**
1. Parents (especially fathers), take note of **PSA 128:3** and cherish your family mealtimes.
  2. “It is pleasant to parents who have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it, to have many children, enough to surround it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them. Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity that *his children were about him*, Job 29:5. Parents love to have their children at table, to keep up the pleasantness of the table-talk, to have them in health, craving food and not physic, to have them like *olive-plants*, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.” (Matthew Henry)
- C. Young people would do well to incorporate good habits befitting responsible adulthood now and concurrently mortifying bad habits.
1. We are creatures of tradition: long-held tastes and methods struggle to come to terms with something new and worthwhile. **LUK 5:39.**
    - a. The newness of something neither makes it right or wrong. It should be evaluated on its merits (**1TH 5:21**) and accordingly accepted or rejected.
    - b. Be open to *good* change. Don’t assume that the way you’ve always done things must be the only way they can be done.
    - c. This will become very important in marriage and work.
  2. We are creatures of habit. **JER 13:23; 31:18.**
    - a. accustom: *trans.* To make (a thing) customary, habitual, usual, or familiar; to practise habitually.
    - b. One can train himself in speech or conduct to where it becomes a second nature. **JER 9:5.**
    - c. This is a power of good or evil.
    - d. Training yourself to think, act or react in an ungodly or irresponsible manner will make that your default method.

- (1) Per **JER 9:5**, you can so accustom yourself to lying that even if the truth would be better, you would lie anyway (c/w **TIT 1:12**) and this will forbid anyone from putting trust in you.
  - (2) If you have been long permitted to “act out” by whining, tantrums or other modes of selfishness and defiance in order to get your way, expect that to be your default approach to anyone or anything that comes along in adult life that counters your will.
  - (3) If you have trained yourself to make excuses for avoiding duty or for poor performance in the home or in school, expect that to be your default approach to job, career or marriage. **MAT 25:24-25**.
  - (4) If you have trained yourself to react angrily to whatever crosses you, expect that to be your default approach and it will mark you as someone to avoid. **PRO 22:24**.
  - (5) If you have trained yourself to think your image is all-important and so shift blame to others rather than admit to your own deficiencies and correct them, expect that to be your default approach to an employer, spouse or family member in adult life. NOTE: all blame-shifting (for image sake or evading punishment) is ultimately blaming God Whose standards are condemning you. **GEN 3:12**.
  - (6) If you have trained yourself to live in a pigsty and not care about personal hygiene, expect that to be your default approach to other areas of life (**PRO 24:30-31**), and expect yourself to be alienated from others.
  - (7) One of the great evils of our culture is young men training themselves to think of women as only sex objects, and young women training themselves to think that is exactly what they should be.
    - i. This has contributed to the epidemic of STD’s in America.
    - ii. It has also contributed to diminished female fullness and sense of worth, absentee fathers, abortion, lesbianism, gender confusion, rape, sexual harassment, impaired and broken marriages, and the Kardashian family (a case study in family, personal and role dysfunction celebrated by the media and idolized by a degenerate culture).
    - iii. Much of this thinking and behavior is linked to a desire for power: men having power over women for the satisfaction of male urges, and women deeming their bodies as tools of empowerment over men, over other women who compete for attention, and to compensate for where they see themselves as lacking or powerless.
- e. Conversely, training yourself to think, speak and act in a godly and responsible manner will make that your default method.
- (1) Train yourself to answer truthfully even when it is difficult to do so: your integrity will be attractive to a potential mate, employer, etc. Your default position is honesty. **1TI 2:2**.
  - (2) Train yourself to realize that whining is not winning, and that winning in life doesn’t mean getting out of things you should be doing nor does it mean always getting your own way. This will be to your advantage in personal and work relationships in adulthood.
  - (3) Train yourself to not make excuses for avoiding duty or for poor

performance but rather acknowledge the failings, resolve to not repeat them and then re-engage with diligence.

- i. This is the very pattern of addressing sin issues in life also.  
**PRO 28:13; ISA 52:2.**
  - ii. **(COL 3:23)** And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;
- (4) Train yourself to look on challenges to your image, methods, time, plans, etc. as being part of life and are there by God's permission to correct you and hone your character. **HEB 12:11.**
- i. Anger has its place but not every place nor uncontrolled.  
**EPH 4:26; 1CO 13:5.**
  - ii. Every obstacle and frustration is an opportunity for your faith to overcome it. **1JO 5:4.**
- (5) Train yourself to not shift blame or counter-accuse when your failure is exposed and your image suffers a hit.
- i. Accept responsibility for failures for which you are genuinely responsible and even be prepared to endure unfounded claims against your character or performance. **1PE 3:16-17.**
  - ii. Remember that real image-management is Christ-likeness.  
**COL 3:10.**
  - iii. This will please God and fit you for acceptance and advancement in this world.
- (6) Train yourself to care for your personal environment and hygiene.
- i. The sweat of labor may be an attractant to the opposite sex but not the rancid, sour smell of poor personal hygiene.
  - ii. Sin is described as filth in Scripture and salvation from sin is oft described as cleansing, washing, etc.
  - iii. Personal order in lesser areas of life speaks volumes. **1TI 3:5.**
- (7) Train your minds healthily and godly about your bodies, the opposite sex, the act of sex and male-female relationships.
- i. Sexual attraction for the opposite sex is normal, natural and sexual intercourse is blessed of God in marriage. **HEB 13:4.**
  - ii. Women should not be objectified as only or even primarily sex objects by men or women. Character matters!
  - iii. The body is NOT for fornication, which is a special class of sin. **1CO 6:13-18.**
  - iv. Training your thinking properly now can save you from much grief and disillusionment in marriage.
  - v. NOTE: You will not be able to train your minds properly by subjecting them to the all-too-available messages of a lust-driven culture. **1CO 15:33.**
  - vi. Adolescent brothers and sisters in the same household would do well to treat one another with the respect and care that is needed for success in marriage.
3. It is vital that you realize that good habits will not be suddenly formed when you gain independence, career or spouse, nor will bad habits then be suddenly mortified. Get to work on these things now.
- a. There is an adage for job-applicants that says, "Dress for the job you want, not for the job you have."

- b. Apply this wisdom in everyday things as you approach adulthood and independence and you will not have to suddenly become someone you have not been when the situation demands it. You will be able to be true to yourself because that is how your self has been habituated.
4. “Sow a thought; reap an act. Sow an act; reap a habit. Sow a habit; reap a character. Sow a character; reap a destiny.” (Unknown)

XIII. Let good principles guide your life and form your reputation.

- A. principle: I. Origin, source; source of action. II. Fundamental truth, law, or motive force. 5. a. A fundamental truth or proposition, on which many others depend; a primary truth comprehending, or forming the basis of, various subordinate truths; a general statement or tenet forming the (or a) ground of, or held to be essential to, a system of thought or belief; a fundamental assumption forming the basis of a chain of reasoning. 7. a. A general law or rule adopted or professed as a guide to action; a settled ground or basis of conduct or practice; a fundamental motive or reason of action, *esp.* one consciously recognized and followed. (Often partly coinciding with sense 5.) b. Used *absol.* for *good, right, or moral principle*: An inward or personal law of right action; personal devotion to right; rectitude, uprightness, honourable character.
- B. Principles are the foundations upon which something stands. If someone lacks good principles, he lacks a good foundation. If he tramples on good principles, he ruins his foundation.
  1. (PSA 11:3) If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?
  2. If a life is built on weak principles, it will be destroyed when difficulty comes. **MAT 7:24-27.**
  3. The decisions one makes will be predicated upon the principles one holds. If one does not have good principles, one will not make good decisions.
  4. Do not expect that an unprincipled life will amount to anything of real value. It will rather be the slave of its own base lusts and a burden, peril or tool to others. **JDG 9:4; ACT 17:5.**
    - a. Unprincipled people are easily manipulated by wicked men into things which only further the interests of the manipulators. **ACT 19:24-29.**
    - b. Principled people are not so easily manipulated. Their principles insulate them against the designs of the manipulators.
    - c. Principles determine if you will be useful to God and good men or just a useful idiot who is the pawn of Satan or self-promoters.
- C. “A person without principles is devoid of character: if he had character, he would feel he needs principles.” (Nicolas Chamfort)
  1. character: 11. The sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race, viewed as a homogeneous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; mental or moral constitution. 12. a. Moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed; distinct or distinguished character; character worth speaking of.
  2. Character is the inner moral strength which enables a man to stick to his principles.
  3. “Good character or integrity may be observed in the fortitude and tenacity with which we hold our principles...The Christian can be flexible in some things, but not in [his] principles.” (Pastor Keith Hoover)
  4. A man of character will keep his word even when it hurts him to do so. **PSA 15:4.**
  5. A man of character will not compromise his principles to save himself time, money, pain, inconvenience, or humiliation.

- a. Job held fast his integrity under intense pressure. **JOB 2:3, 9-10.**
  - b. Job held fast his faith under intense pressure. **JOB 13:15.**
  - c. Abraham turned down great reward on principle. **GEN 14:22-23.**
  - d. Daniel and his friends made crucial and imperiling decisions based upon principles. **DAN 1:8; 6:10; 3:15-18.**
  - e. David came to terms with his weakness and determined to not make provision for it. **PSA 101:3.**
  - f. The apostles disobeyed unjust law on principle. **ACT 4:19-20.**
6. A man of character will not compromise his principles so that he can maintain his duty, honor, reputation or the health of his soul. **PRO 22:1; 1CO 6:12; 9:27.**
- a. Vice President Mike Pence holds that he never eats alone with a woman other than his wife and that he won't attend events featuring alcohol without her by his side.
  - b. For this principled integrity, a perverse attack has been made on him: that he is a woman-hater, unable to control his urges, akin to a Muslim who insists on covering up women, etc.
  - c. This is the pathetic state of our culture which generally has ONE Principle and NO Character: "The one principle of the unprincipled is that there can be no principles and anyone who claims principle is THE ENEMY."  
(Pastor Keith Hoover)
- D. Principles will not only keep you on the path of righteousness in the black-and-white decisions of life (*God commands it, I do it; God forbids it, I don't do it*), principles will regulate your decisions in the grey areas and in areas of liberty.
- 1. It is in these latter categories that many good people fail God, fail others and sully their own honor.
  - 2. *Licitus perimus omnes* (These lawful things undo us).
  - 3. Something may be lawful but not expedient (conducive to advantage). Sometimes, a greater good should take precedence. **1CO 6:12; 10:23.**
- E. The formula for a successful adult life is:
- 1. Establish good principles as foundations for all decisions.
  - 2. Make your decisions according to the principles.
  - 3. Do not thwart your principles by decisions inconsistent with them.
- F. Here is a partial list of principles for victorious, successful living:
- 1. Jesus Christ is Lord and has preeminence in all things (**COL 1:18**). Therefore what I decide or do should have His glory in mind (**1CO 10:31**) since it is a reflection on His holy name which ought not to be blasphemed through me. **ROM 2:24.**
    - a. Both God and reasonable men despise hypocrisy.
    - b. Consistency with avowed beliefs and principles will be respected.
  - 2. Jesus Christ's word is highly magnified (**PSA 138:2**), utterly reliable (**PSA 119:160**) and able to perfect believers (**2TI 3:16-17**). Therefore I will consult it, not defy it, trivialize it nor neglect it.
  - 3. Jesus Christ's house and worship is important to God (**EPH 3:21; HEB 10:25**). Therefore I will prioritize it over my interests and schedule my week accordingly.
  - 4. God is faithful to supply the everyday needs of believers (**MAT 6:33**). Therefore I will not abandon faith out of concern for those things and I will be at peace.
  - 5. Inner peace and domestic peace are more important than material gain and satisfying lusts (**PHIL 4:6-7; PRO 17:1**). Therefore I will hold the stuff of this world in comparatively light regard so as to not frustrate what is of true value.
  - 6. People and relationships are more valuable than stuff. Therefore I will love others

- more than power, fame and material wealth, and I will love my neighbor as myself. **ROM 13:9.**
7. God wants me to walk in liberty (**GAL 5:13**). Therefore I will eschew the bondage of financial debt (**PRO 22:7**) and the bondage of sin: Christ's cross is much easier to carry when I am not weighed down with the old man of sin (**EPH 4:22**) and my true liberty is rather found in His precepts. **PSA 119:45.**
    - a. I will not willingly put myself under the bondage of a lie about God or myself and plead with Him to deliver me from such evil. **MAT 6:13.**
    - b. I will not be the slave of my bodily appetites, neither its unlawful lusts nor its lawful needs. I will not defile my body morally (**1CO 6:18-20**) and I will reckon that "eat to live" is better than "live to eat."
    - c. I will take stock of the weakness of my flesh and steer clear of danger rather than flirt with it. **ROM 13:14.**
    - d. I know the reality of "garbage in, garbage out" (**1CO 15:33; GAL 6:7-8**) and therefore will simply resist undue exposure to corrupting influences.
  8. Increase comes through diligence and work, not vanity (**ROM 12:11; PRO 13:11**). Therefore I will plan my life accordingly and eschew a welfare-mentality and get-rich-quick thinking.
  9. Every good thing that I gain is a gift from God Who owns all things (**1CH 29:12-14**). Therefore I will thankfully honor Him with my substance (**PRO 3:9-10**) and I will not curse Him if He diminishes it. **JOB 1:21.**
  10. Pride will destroy me and be resisted by God (**PRO 16:18; JAM 4:6**). Therefore I will seek only advancement through humility (**1PE 5:6**). I will not succumb to the narcissistic, attention-getting culture of social media and end up cheapening myself.
  11. I know that a man is known and affected by the company he keeps. Therefore I will choose the company of good people (**PSA 119:63**) and avoid the company of the base or ungodly where possible (**PSA 1:1; 1CO 5:9-10**). I will not let peer pressure to "go along with the crowd" overrule good judgment. **EXO 23:2.**
  12. I know that godly, positive emotions and thoughts are the way to victorious relating to God and others, and the best way to process this broken world (**PHIL 4:8**). Therefore I will not be driven by negative thoughts of hopelessness and fear of everything and everyone around me.
  13. My speech should please God and benefit others (**EPH 4:29**). Therefore I must control my tongue if I am to have any hope of controlling the rest of myself (**JAM 3:2**) and this means cleansing my heart, not exposing its corruption. **MAT 12:34; JAM 4:8.**
  14. A sound mind is necessary to know God and process this life properly (**2TI 1:7 ct/w ROM 1:28**). Therefore I will not allow intoxicants to thwart this soundness (**PRO 24:29-35**) nor will I allow sin to turn me over to confusion or madness. **DEU 28:28; PSA 71:1.**
  15. God is good and cares for His own with tender care and mercies, sovereignly overruling wickedness for the sake of the righteous. Therefore I will not be adversely moved by all the noise of a tumultuous world. **PSA 23:4; 62:2.**
  16. There is a certain judgment beyond this life and an accounting to be held (**HEB 9:27; ACT 17:31; 2CO 5:10**). Therefore I will live in the fear of God and not be ashamed. **1JO 2:28.**