

The title of this morning's sermon is *"Don't Let Anyone Look Down on You Because You Are Young."*

I told you I had a few sermons on my heart that I wanted to preach before returning to my verse-by-verse study through Luke's Gospel, and this is one of them.

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The people known as the Greatest Generation were born from 1901 to 1927. They lived through the Great Depression and fought in World War II. Most of us have seen photos of the June 6, 1944, Normandy Landing, also known as D-Day, with young men in the boats who look like they wouldn't even be out of high school yet. The young people of this generation are celebrated for their sacrifices and maturity at young ages.

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The other day I read that when the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, Thomas Jefferson was 33, James Madison was 25, Alexander Hamilton was 21, Aaron Burr was 20, and James Monroe was 18.

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Sadly, when people talk about young people of our generation they describe them as selfish and entitled. The premier example of this might be young people taking their parents to court, such as when Rachel Canning sued her parents to force them to pay her private college tuition. Her father shared that "she didn't want to follow our house rules concerning curfew and chores" – reasonable expectations – and felt entitled to "private school, [a] new car, [and] college education."

Ephesians 6:2 commands children to honor their parents, but Rachel, and children like her, do the opposite.

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Our culture has come up with ways to define young people. For example, we talk about teenagers and adolescents, but Scripture never uses these words. Instead, it talks about children, men, young men, older men, women, young women, and older women. For example:

**1 Timothy 5:1 Do not rebuke an OLDER MAN but encourage him as you would a father, YOUNGER MEN as brothers, 2 OLDER WOMEN as mothers, YOUNGER WOMEN as sisters, in all purity.**

**Titus 2:2 OLDER MEN are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. 3 OLDER WOMEN likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, 4 and so train the YOUNG WOMEN to love their husbands and children.**

People are usually said to reach adulthood at the age of 18. The fact that this is different in different cultures tells us we can't figure out when people should be considered adults.

We don't want to look to the culture or the world for definitions and explanations. So, what does God's Word say?

The Old Testament seems to identify 20 as the age people are no longer children:

When the Israelites rebelled in the wilderness on the border of the Promised Land, everyone over twenty was said to die in the wilderness, but those under twenty who were spared and able to enter the Promised Land are called children (Numbers 14:31):

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People 20 years and older were counted when there was a census, and they could serve in the military.

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So, does this mean that children do not have to be mature until they are 20?

No, because if we want to use the New Testament, listen to the way Paul described moving from being a child to being a man:

**1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.**

Paul didn't define childhood or manhood by any number, but instead by behavior. In other words, he didn't say he became a man when he reached a certain age. He said he became a man when he gave up childish ways, or childish behavior.

This would seem to teach moving from childhood to manhood or womanhood has less to do with age and more to do with behavior:

- Some children are more mature, or reach manhood or womanhood earlier than some people who are much older than them because of the childish ways they have given up.
- Conversely, some older people are more immature than people much younger than them, because of the childish ways they have not given up.

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When we look at Scripture, we see there were many people who were still young, but behaved maturely, and were called to very mature roles in life.

And this brings us to lesson one:

### Lesson One: God wants to use young men and women.

Let's establish a pattern that God wants to use young people, and we'll start with the twelve disciples.

Unfortunately, when we think of the twelve disciples, we often think of men in their thirties or forties, and there are probably two reasons for this. First, because Jesus began his ministry when he was thirty:

**Luke 3:23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age.**

But if Jesus began his ministry at thirty the disciples would have to be much younger than thirty, because Jesus was their teacher and disciples, or students, were younger than their teacher.

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Over the years you've probably noticed I am not the biggest fan of Bible pictures, because they are often misleading. If we are given dimensions or descriptions, such as for the ark of the covenant or the temple, an illustration is reasonable because Scripture tells us what it looked like. But if Scripture doesn't give us any description then we get in trouble when we come up with images of things that are not described for us.

In this case, you can guess I am talking about the disciples. Listen to this...

The Biblical World is a journal, and I want to read part of their article titled "How Old Were Christ's Disciples?"

*"Our mental pictures of the scenes described in the Gospels are greatly influenced by impressions that were received from the illustrated books of our childhood and by the way those scenes have been depicted by the great artists. Painters have been inclined to represent most of the Twelve Disciples as heavily bearded men, apparently in middle life if not beyond it, Peter and some of the others being bald-headed... Are such pictures true to the facts? How old were these men?"*

The article is ten pages long, so I won't read all of it to you, but it concludes...

*"[The twelve disciples were] not far from sixteen or seventeen."*

Here are some reasons this is a safe bet...

First, in Matthew 11:25, Luke 10:21, and John 13:33, Jesus referred to the disciples as "little children."

Second, for John to write the book of Revelation at the end of the first century, think 95-96AD, he had to have been close to fifteen or sixteen when he became Jesus' disciple.

Third, there's at least one account that indicates all the disciples, except Peter, were under twenty, which explains why Peter was the leader of the group and the only one of the twelve who was married (Matthew 8:14).

According to Exodus 30:13-14 everyone twenty years and older had to pay the temple tax.

Matthew 17:24-27 records Jesus and Peter paying the temple tax. The other disciples were present, but they didn't pay it, because they weren't twenty years old yet.

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A few of the disciples had established jobs. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen, and Matthew was a tax collector. This might make them seem older, but Jewish schooling ended around twelve years old, at which time they began working.

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Why might Jesus have wanted the disciples to be young?

They had so much ahead of them!

**Ephesians 2:20 [the church was] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.**

The disciples had to lay the foundation of the church. They were just getting started when Jesus' earthly ministry ended.

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God corrected, or we might even argue, rebuked, one young man who said he was too young to serve the Lord. God told Jeremiah:

**Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” 6 Then [Jeremiah] said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I AM ONLY A YOUTH.”**

Jeremiah thought he was too young, so he responded poorly when God asked him to be a prophet.

**Jeremiah 1:7 But the Lord [said], “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.”**

God did not reply to Jeremiah's objection by saying something like, *“Oh, sorry, I didn't realize you were so young. Don't worry about serving me yet. Spend the next decade goofing off, playing video games, watching movies, and then you can become a prophet when you're older.”*

Instead, God expected Jeremiah to preach to nations...even as a young man.

Young people today aren't called to be prophets or one of the twelve apostles, but they should still see themselves as Jesus' disciples. God gives them gifts to minister to the body of Christ. They shouldn't believe they're too young to serve God or others. He has special purposes for them to fulfill.

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Hopefully you are still in 2 Chronicles 34. Look with me at verse one:

**2 Chronicles 34:1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.**

Now I know this breaks down, because our young people aren't called to become kings, but that's not the point. The point is Josiah served the Lord faithfully at eight and our young people can too. It won't be as kings, but it can be in other areas of faithfulness:

- Faithful brother or sister
- Faithful son or daughter
- Faithful with chores
- Faithful finding ways to bless others

**2 Chronicles 34:2 And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.**

Josiah was able to do what was right in the eyes of the Lord even at 8 years old, which means our children can do what is right in the eyes of the Lord even at 8 years old.

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Notice it says, “walked in the ways of David his father.”

David wasn't Josiah's father. He was his great – times twenty – grandfather.

This is one part of the sermon that application for parents. Not only are we setting an example for our children, but for their children and their children and their children. And this is sobering.

The question is what kind of example are we setting? What kind of ways will our children and grandchildren be walking because of us?

**2 Chronicles 3:3a For in the eighth year of his reign, WHILE HE WAS YET A BOY, he began to seek the God of David his father,**

He began to seek God at 16! He didn't wait for his parents to point him toward God, because his father, Amon, was dead. That's how Josiah became king at such a young age. But also, because Amon was so evil. He pointed Josiah AWAY from the Lord, but he still sought him anyway.

**2 Chronicles 3:3b and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images.**

At 20 he began to purge the nation of sin. Talk about great spiritual leadership at a young age.

Skip to verse 8:

**2 Chronicles 34:8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had cleansed the land and the house (referring to the temple), he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.**

He cleansed and repaired the temple at 26.

We don't have time to read all the verses, but here's what happened: because the previous two Kings, Josiah's father Amon, and his grandfather, Manasseh, were two of the wickedest Kings over Judah, they led the nation away from God, so there was no regard for God's Word.

When Josiah sent these people to cleanse and repair the temple they found God's Word, brought it to Josiah, read it to him, and look at verse 19:

**2 Chronicles 34:19 And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes.**

I don't care what age you are, this is one of the most beautiful responses to God's Word anyone could ever have, and Josiah responded this way when he was 26.

You don't have to turn there, but the parallel account adds:

**2 Kings 23:21 [Josiah] commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the Lord your God"...22 For no such Passover had been kept SINCE THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES...OR DURING ALL THE DAYS OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL OR OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH. 23 But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to the Lord in Jerusalem.**

Josiah reinstated Passover, which hadn't been observed since the days of the judges over three or four centuries ago.

He demonstrated incredible spiritual leadership and commitment to the Lord at a young age.

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The premier verse addressing young people is 1 Timothy 4:12. Please turn there.

**1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.**

This is fascinating. Paul didn't tell Timothy to set an example for unbelievers, which would be one thing, because it's much easier to be an example to an ungodly person versus a godly person. Paul told Timothy to set an example for believers, or godly people.

And he lists five ways for young people to do this. Let's quickly talk about each:

**Lesson Two: Young people should set an example in (Part One) word.**

The way young people speak should set an example.

When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents left him at the temple, went back to get him, and we read:

**Luke 2:46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.**

Yes, Jesus was God in the flesh, but young people can still learn from his example. They can listen well and ask good questions. Have you ever noticed how mature people can seem, not just by what they say, but by the questions they ask? It shows a desire to learn and understand, which is impressive.

**Lesson Two: Young people should set an example in (Part Two) conduct.**

The way young people behave and carry themselves should set an example.

Sometimes when people are young, they don't think their behavior could serve as an example for others. They think nobody looks up to them until they're older, perhaps in their thirties, forties, or even fifties.

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Another way to describe conduct is behavior. If you're a young person:

- How would people describe your behavior?
- When you enter a room is your presence known because you're loud and obnoxious or because you are kind and gracious?

- Are you whiny and selfish, or are you concerned with the welfare of others?

God wants to help you in these areas even at a young age! You are not alone in seeking to be more mature, and if anyone can help you, it's God himself! Pray and ask him.

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Next...

### Lesson Two: Young people should set an example in (Part Three) love.

Remember love is actions versus feelings: 1 Corinthians 13, “The Love Chapter,” is filled with verbs, or action words, versus adjectives, or describing words. We show love by what we do for others.

To say young people should set an example in love is to say they should set an example in actions.

### **1 Corinthians 7:32, 34 The unmarried man and woman are anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.**

These verses describe single people. Without the responsibilities married people have, such as caring for a spouse and possibly children, young people have more time and energy to love others. They can serve in the church, help families, engage in evangelism, and visit the elderly.

### Lesson Two: Young people should set an example in (Part Four) in faith.

Young people should have a zeal for God that sets an example for others. Few things encourage senior saints more than seeing young people with passionate hearts for the Lord.

### Lesson Two: Young people should set an example in (Part Five) in purity.

This could be considered another shocker. Sometimes I think there's this belief that young people, especially young men are going to struggle with purity. Well, not according to Paul. He says they should set an example in purity!

This means young people must be sensitive to things they look at or think about. A sensitive heart is one that must be cultivated and kept with great intentionality. It doesn't just happen, and in fact, as you get older, you can become LESS sensitive in the area of purity.

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Consider this verse:

### **1 Thessalonians 4:7 God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.**

Impurity and holiness are opposites, so purity and holiness are synonyms.

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Isn't this a little counterintuitive? Don't we expect older people to set an example in purity or holiness? So, why would Paul say young people should set the example?

Let me answer this by sharing two things that happen as I get older.

First, I gain credibility because as I age, people think I have more wisdom and knowledge. This is biblical:

### **Job 12:12 Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding [with] length of days.**

Second, I lose credibility, at least when I talk about certain things, because the older I am, the more conservative people expect me to become. When people speak conservatively in their sixties, seventies, or eighties, what do people think?

“Well, of course, you’re going to say that, because you’re old!”

This is part of why, as long as I’m still not THAT old, I try to preach as boldly as I can on conservative topics.

This brings us to the reason young people should set an example in purity and holiness: you have the most credibility! It’s one thing when older people are pure and holy, but few things are as powerful as young people leading pure and holy lives.

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I want to share one more verse. Turn to Ecclesiastes 12:1.

**Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them.”**

Here’s what I would expect if I didn’t know this verse:

- I would expect God to tell EVERYONE to remember their Creator, because it’s important for everyone to remember their Creator.
- Or I would expect God to tell older people to remember their Creator, because they’re closer to meeting him.

So, why would God tell young people to remember their Creator?

I have three reasons I believe Solomon wrote this, and I will give them quickly, and this brings us to Lesson 3...

**Lesson Three: Remember your Creator when you’re young because (Part One) everything is working well.**

Let me illustrate this lesson this way. People remember their Creator really quickly when they:

- Have a heart attack.
- Get the diagnosis for a disease.
- See their health failing as Solomon describes in the previous verses.

We don’t like having physical problems, but one of the wonderful benefits is they cause us to turn to the Lord. When I am weak, then I am strong. Few things cause us to pray more than health issues.

But when you’re young, you typically don’t have the sort of physical problems that older people have that can cause them to seek the Lord in prayer. It’s easy to forget God when you feel good.

So, Solomon says remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before your body starts breaking down and forces you to think about him.

**Lesson Three: Remember your Creator when you’re young because (Part Two) meeting him seems far away.**

Older people think about death much more than younger people, which means they think about their Creator more than young people. While that’s good for older people, it is not so good for young people.

We should spend our lives, not just our older years, thinking about meeting our Creator. My kids just watched a Paul Washer sermon this week and he said, “Get off social media and spend the rest of the day thinking about your death.”

Many people have gotten older, looked back, and realized they forgot about their Creator for much of their life. Then they wish they would've done what Solomon said and remembered Him in the days of their youth.

### Lesson Three: Remember your Creator when you're young because (Part Three) of the world.

The world wants to draw you in when you're young. There are unique temptations young people experience.

When you are young, it's easy to get caught up in everything the world offers. Being young is exciting, but the excitement can become a barrier to closeness with God. Young people can be more focused on the physical and temporal of this life than the spiritual and eternal of the next life.

So Solomon says remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Doing so will keep you from the world.

Let me conclude with a strong appeal to the young people here...

God has given you time, energy, strength, vitality, intellect, desire, passion, and talent. Basically, he's given you the very things the previous verses say you will lose over time as you get older.

So, make the most of these things available to you while you are young and still can.

- While you have the energy.
- While you don't have the limitations you will have when you are older.
- While everything is working well for you.

Don't waste what God gives you on worldly and meaningless activities and pursuits.

You only have these gifts, talents, and strengths for a limited amount of time because they are going to diminish as you get older, and other responsibilities are going to start filling your life. So take the fullest advantage of your youth.

Tragically there are many people who come to the end of their lives and regret that they wasted so many years NOT serving God.

Do you know one of the best examples, if not the best example, not just in Scripture, but in all history of doing exactly what Solomon is warning against?

Solomon!

It is not a coincidence that he is the one who wrote this.

God wrote Scripture through human authors, but he often used the human author's strengths, weaknesses, and experiences, to give them credibility and further bolster the points they are making.

Most people agree that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes at the end of his life. He knew better than anyone what it felt like to reach the end of his life after squandering what God had given him. He is one of the best examples of wasting those important strong, healthy years on pleasure and worldliness.

So, he reaches out to young people and says, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth so that you will not get older and have the same regrets that I have."

The young people here should read this account and say, "Since I know that the difficult days are coming, and I won't have this strength and vitality forever, I better lay a strong spiritual foundation during the good days when I'm young."

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If you have any questions, or I can pray for you in any way, I'll be up front after service, and I'd consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.