

# Young People of the Bible

**M.K. Canner**



# Young People of the Bible

M.K. Canner



**MOMENTS WITH THE BOOK**  
PO Box 322 • Bedford, PA 15522  
(814) 623-8737 • [www.mwtb.org](http://www.mwtb.org)

## **YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE**

Third MWTB Edition, 2008

This work originally appeared as a series of articles in the Bi-monthly publication *Words of Truth*.

Quotations from the Bible are adapted by the author from the King James Version.

Published by:  
Moments With The Book  
PO Box 322  
Bedford, PA 15522 USA

To order this book, visit [www.mwtb.org](http://www.mwtb.org)

Printed in the United States of America

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	6
<b>Ishmael: The Dangers of Mocking</b> . . . . .	7
<b>Isaac: Obedience in All Things</b> . . . . .	8
<b>Rebekah: Trusting and Obeying</b> . . . . .	9
<b>Jacob and Esau: The Story of a Bad Bargain</b> . . . . .	11
<b>Dinah: The High Cost of Popularity</b> . . . . .	13
<b>Joseph: Does It Pay to Do Right?</b> . . . . .	14
<b>Samuel: Not Despising Small Beginnings</b> . . . . .	16
<b>David: The Power of Faith</b> . . . . .	18
<b>Jonathan: Choosing Friends</b> . . . . .	19
<b>Mephibosheth: Hope for the Helpless</b> . . . . .	21
<b>Absalom: What Do We Need Besides Forgiveness?</b> . . . .	23
<b>Solomon and Joash: Vocational Guidance</b> . . . . .	25
<b>Hezekiah: Who Is Responsible?</b> . . . . .	27
<b>Josiah: Worthy Ambition</b> . . . . .	28
<b>Daniel and His Companions: Young Men of Prayer</b> . . .	31
<b>The Virgin Mary: Is Premarital Chastity Important?</b> . . .	33
<b>Jesus at Age Twelve: Perfect Spiritual Development</b> . . .	35
<b>Timothy: An Example for His Elders</b> . . . . .	37

# Introduction

These articles originally appeared in series form in the *Words of Truth* magazine. They have been slightly revised so as to be more suitable for publication in book form. They are not meant to be a complete catalogue of the young people in the Bible nor complete biographies of the young people discussed. The characters and incidents have been chosen to bring out lessons (some on the Gospel, others on Christian living) that might be helpful to young people of the present time.

# Ishmael

## *The Dangers of Mocking*

Have you ever made fun of a younger brother or sister? Ishmael did and the results were very unpleasant.

Ishmael was Abraham's son by his wife's slave, Hagar. When Ishmael was fourteen, Sarah, Abraham's true wife, gave birth to Isaac. During the feast celebrating Isaac's weaning, Ishmael mocked or made fun of his younger half-brother. Sarah saw Ishmael's behavior and the next day Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, were sent out into the desert with meager supplies of food and water. Both Ishmael and Hagar would have perished in the desert; but God had promised Abraham that Ishmael would be the father of a great nation, so He provided them with water (Genesis 21).

What is the lesson for us in this account of Ishmael? Isaac is often thought of as a type of Christ and Abraham as a type of the Father. Ishmael reminds us of those who mock, make fun of, or reject the claims of Christ upon them. When Ishmael mocked Isaac, Isaac was a helpless child, but he was to inherit Abraham's wealth and prestige. Christ is not now exercising His power and authority over the earth, but He will judge men in a coming day and only those who have trusted in Him will be His coheirs (Romans 8:17). Any who go into eternity mocking will have no place in the Father's house, but will be cast into hell, a "desert" worse than any here on earth, with no relief from suffering, no sudden rescue as God provided Ishmael.

Young people, are any of you mocking? Have you rejected or made light of the earnest pleas of godly parents or other Christians to turn to Christ and accept Him as your

Saviour? Consider Ishmael's fate and remember that if you do not accept Christ in this life, you will spend eternity cast out from God's presence with no hope of ever being received into a place of blessing.

# Isaac

## *Obedience in All Things*

What would you do if you realized your father planned to sacrifice your life as part of a religious ceremony? What do you do when your parents ask you to do something you consider unpleasant? Isaac's response to these questions would have been, "I obey."

When Isaac was a "lad," his father was told by God to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22). This experience was a test of Abraham's faith, but it was also a test of Isaac's obedience to his father.

If you will notice in the verses where the preparations for the journey are described, Abraham makes no explanations to Isaac nor does Isaac ask any questions. Isaac goes with his father because it is the will of his father. Only after they have almost attained their destination does Isaac ask a single question: "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" He accepts without argument Abraham's answer which, to some of us, might seem rather vague. Even when Isaac realizes that he is to be the sacrifice, there is no record of any struggle, complaint, or argument.

Young people, do you submit to the authority of your parents? Surely none of us has been asked to obey under such extreme conditions as Isaac was experiencing here. Abraham was simply carrying out God's command, and our parents, if Christians, usually give us directions as they

understand God's will. It is definitely God's will for children to submit to the authority of their parents (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20). Our parents love us and wish to see us develop into happy, obedient Christians, and they direct us according to this goal.

Obedience to parents is the foundation of a stable society as well as a happy home. When children learn respect for authority at home, they will have respect for the authority of the government and respect for the authority of God, which is the most important of all.

Where there is no respect for authority, there is chaos. All of the sin and trouble in the world dates back to Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's express command. The riots and disruptions in this and other countries today are due to lack of respect for the authority of parents, teachers, government, and especially the authority of God.

As things turned out, Isaac did not lose his life and he came into much blessing in later years. Submitting to the authority of our parents will never bring us grief, but it will be a source of blessing to us both now and throughout our lives.

# Rebekah

## *Trusting and Obeying*

Abraham had asked his servant to go back to Abraham's original country and find a wife for Isaac among his relatives. When the servant met Rebekah, he found her a beautiful young woman. She was also a well brought up young woman, carrying out her share of the household responsibilities and remembering to offer hospitality to strangers (Genesis 24).

Besides being an example of right behavior in a young woman, she is also an example of unquestioning faith once God's will is made known. Rebekah, her father, and her brother were evidently convinced that her meeting with Abraham's servant was no mere coincidence; the Lord had planned it all. They could not refuse the servant's request without disobeying God. But, we might ask, what did this mean for Rebekah in human terms? She would be leaving the happy home of her childhood; there is no indication that she ever saw her parents or brother again. While Isaac was apparently well-to-do, as evidenced by the expensive gifts he had sent, the servant had given no clue as to his character. Would he be a good husband to her? Surely there were local men who would have made good husbands. All of these possible objections counted for nothing. God's will had been made manifest. How beautiful her simple reply, "I will go" (verse 58)!

How happy the outcome for Rebekah! Not only was her husband rich, but he loved her. (Love was not always a part of the arranged marriages of oriental societies.) She remained the sole object of Isaac's affections the rest of their lives, for he took no other wives or concubines, even though she was barren for twenty years. She became the mother of two heads of nations, including the nation of promise.

What does this say to us? Seek God's will for you, pray earnestly for an understanding of it. Study His Word by which He will make known His will to you through the Holy Spirit. God knows what is best for us, whether it be the choice of a school, career, or marriage partner. There may be all sorts of human objections to the path God wants us to take, but we must follow His will. It may seem as if we are leaving all happiness behind to set out

through a desert to some unknown destination; but if we are carrying out God's will, He will abundantly bless at the end. The Lord Jesus (of whom Isaac is a type) is not only the One by whom all things were created, not only our Saviour, but He is our Friend as well. He loves us and wants only what is best for us. Look to God for guidance each day, every moment, in every circumstance, and you will have a happy, spiritually healthy life.

# Jacob and Esau

## *The Story of a Bad Bargain*

Have you ever made what you thought was a good bargain, only to find out later it wasn't so good after all? That is what happened to Esau.

Jacob and Esau were twins, but they were very unlike. They didn't look alike and they had different interests. Esau was a hunter who loved to roam the hills looking for game. Jacob spent his time closer to home, tending sheep. One day Esau went out hunting; and when he got home, he was very hungry. Jacob had been cooking lentil stew. Esau asked Jacob for some of the stew; Jacob refused to give him any but agreed to sell him some in exchange for Esau's birthright (Genesis 25:27-31).

Before going on with our story, perhaps I should explain what a birthright is. In ancient times the oldest son received the great bulk of his father's property at the time of his father's death. This was his birthright as oldest son. In Esau's case his birthright would not only include his father's cattle and money but all the promises God had given to Abraham: his descendants would become a great nation, God would give him special protection, all nations

of the earth would be blessed through him (the Messiah would be among his descendants), and his descendants would receive the land of Canaan as their own (Genesis 12:1-3,7). This certainly would have been a wonderful inheritance.

But Esau thought he was going to die of hunger; and he evidently didn't think any birthright worth dying for, so he agreed to sell it to Jacob for some stew (Genesis 5:32-34). God said Esau "despised his birthright." Later, when Esau realized just what he had lost in this sale, he wept bitterly; but there was no way he could get back the blessing he had exchanged for a bowl of stew (Genesis 27:34-38, Hebrews 12:16,17).

Many, many people in this world are selling their hope of eternal blessing for something that has as much real value as a bowl of stew. What people want in exchange for their blessing varies with the person. Some want pleasure, others money, still others fame and worldly recognition. But when, in eternity, they realize what they have lost, they will "lift up their voices and weep" and realize that none of these things were worth the price paid.

God wants each one of us to have eternal life. He "gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He offers eternal life as a gift, but this life is through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). If we want eternal life, we must accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Lord and Saviour. Don't let an interest in the attractions of the world cause you to neglect or reject Christ. Your soul in exchange for anything is a bad bargain. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

# Dinah

## *The High Cost of Popularity*

Dinah was restless. She wanted to meet some girls her own age. A little trip into the countryside might provide some excitement, so Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land, evidently unchaperoned. Before long she got into trouble with a young man named Shechem (Genesis 34).

It is not clear if Dinah cooperated in any way with Shechem. Afterwards, he wanted to “do the right thing by her,” to marry her and give her an honorable position. But he went about it backwards. He should have spoken to Jacob first and then taken Dinah to his home. He had “wrought folly...which thing ought not to be done” (verse 7).

What were the consequences of Dinah’s trip? First, she was personally disgraced. Her brothers said she had been treated as a harlot. We never read of Dinah marrying or bearing children, for virginity was highly valued in a bride in those days. (In fact, she is not mentioned again at all, although other women are listed in the genealogies.) Second, her brothers sinned. They deliberately lied to Shechem and his father and murdered innocent men. Dinah was in some sense responsible for these murders including the murder of the man who loved her. Third, her father was disgraced. He feared for his life. He was saved from the wrath of his neighbors by God’s intervention, as recorded in the next chapter.

Many Christian young people are making dangerous excursions into this world seeking freedom, excitement, and popularity. Many of these excursions end in the same

way as Dinah's. Although it is not the custom today for a young woman's brothers to avenge her honor, there is still a harvest of shame, sin, and disgrace to be reaped from immorality. "Such things ought not to be done." When a young person sins, his or her whole family shares in the grief and shame brought on by the sin.

Dear young people, worldly popularity is never worth the cost. Even if the cost in some cases is not outright wickedness, there usually will be some compromise with evil. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Do we want God's friendship or the world's? We cannot have both. Only if we choose God's friendship, will we have true friendship and happiness at all. None of us would care to be considered enemies of God. Let us make sure we are not acting as if we were.

# Joseph

## *Does It Pay to Do Right?*

Poor Joseph! Every time he did what was right, someone played a dirty trick on him. Do you sometimes wonder if it pays to do what is right? Perhaps Joseph's story will encourage you.

Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children (Genesis 37:3). Jacob no doubt saw in Joseph qualities lacking in his other sons and even in himself, for there was nothing of deceit or guile in Joseph. He was completely open and frank. He hid nothing from his father or his brothers. He told his dreams to his brothers; and so completely were hatred and treachery removed from his nature that he had no idea that his revelations would bring out such an

adverse reaction from his brothers.

Joseph was also in complete submission to his father. Jacob asked Joseph to visit his brothers and inquire about their welfare while they were away from home tending sheep (Genesis 37:13). By this time Joseph must have been aware of his brothers' hatred and he must have heard of their treacherous and ruthless treatment of Shechem. He could only expect harsh treatment if he went to them alone and unprotected. Yet he offered no word of complaint or fear to Jacob, but did as his father commanded. His brothers responded to his concern for their welfare by selling him as a slave to traders going to Egypt.

We have seen how Joseph's character contrasted with that of his brothers. His response to Potiphar's wife shows how his behavior contrasted with that of his half-sister, Dinah. She went out into the world of her own accord, seeking social contacts. He was thrust into Egypt (a type of the world) against his will. She ended up in the house of Shechem, disgraced. He went to prison an innocent man rather than yield to temptation. Joseph's ability to refuse to listen to Potiphar's wife's suggestions was sustained by his horror of sinning against God. He was a normal young man with normal desires and reactions; he was in a strange land and, no doubt, led a very lonely personal life. But he fled temptation and suffered in prison rather than sin against God. We have no strength in ourselves to resist temptation of any kind. The Lord Jesus knows our problems; He intercedes for us and can help us. Let us dread sin so much that we flee dangerous situations before it becomes too late.

So again, Joseph did what was right and suffered for it. Joseph probably would not have escaped prison even if he had yielded. Potiphar's wife appears to have been a

thoroughly treacherous woman and might have betrayed Joseph to her husband when she tired of him. So Joseph would still have had to endure punishment, only without the comfort of a clear conscience and the knowledge of God's approval.

The rest of Joseph's history is familiar to us. He finally began to reap the righteousness he had sown. By the time he was thirty years old he was second ruler in Egypt. He was given a wife who bore him two sons. And finally he was reunited with his father and brothers. Joseph's uncompromising righteousness brought him into many trials; but because of his righteousness God was with him and he eventually prospered and prevailed over his enemies.

Remember Joseph when you are tempted to cover evil or deceive or submit to temptation. Remember him when you are suffering for doing what is right. God only prospers us when we do things His way. Joseph had to wait many years before his blessing was complete, but he would never have received that blessing at all if he had done anything differently. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

## Samuel

### *Not Despising Small Beginnings*

In fulfillment of a vow she had made to God before he was born, Hannah had left her son, Samuel, with Eli, the high priest, so that Samuel could assist Eli in the tabernacle. One night God spoke to Samuel, who was still a child, and gave him a message for Eli. It was a brief message but a

disturbing one. Eli and his sons were to be judged by God because of the sons' wickedness and Eli's indulgence of them. Samuel did not wish to relate the message to Eli; but when Samuel was asked by Eli, he told him the whole thing and kept nothing back (1 Samuel 3).

God was, I believe, testing Samuel at this time, as well as giving a message to Eli; for Eli had heard a similar message before from another source (1 Samuel 2:27-36). God wanted to make sure Samuel could be trusted to deliver His Word faithfully and without flinching. Samuel later was the judge of Israel and a prophet of the Lord for many years, but his work started with this brief message delivered to Eli.

What is the lesson for us from this incident that occurred in Samuel's youth? I would say it is this: Do not despise small beginnings. What if Samuel had neglected or refused to give Eli the message either out of fear or because he did not think such a brief message mattered? Could God have used him as He did later on? Would he have been the leader of the people and the one to anoint two kings of Israel, including the earthly ancestor of the King of kings? I think not. God would have chosen someone else as His messenger.

God does not start His servants out in a big way. He gradually builds up the responsibilities He gives them according to their faithfulness in carrying out the ones they already have. If God has given you a small work, do it well, and He will guide you into larger fields as you become ready for them.

"Then came the first, saying, Lord, Thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And He said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:16,17).

# David

## *The Power of Faith*

What does it take to kill a giant in face-to-face combat—great strength? previous experience? superior weapons? Would you like to face a giant if you were armed with nothing but a slingshot and faith in God? David did and won.

All of us are familiar with the account of David's victory over Goliath (1 Samuel 17). It is a favorite Sunday school lesson and appeals to people of all ages. It is a very satisfying story because the big boastful bully (Goliath), with all of his weapons and military know-how, is done in by a simple, unassuming shepherd boy with a stone and a sling. All of us identify with David and wish we could as easily overcome those who threaten or annoy us.

But David's victory was not a matter of chance or a result only of Goliath's overconfidence. God helped David, and He helped David because of his faith. David's faith had been tested while he was keeping the sheep and it had passed the test. David had looked to God for help in overcoming the wild animals and He gave David the wisdom and strength to kill them. David gave God the glory for these victories and trusted Him to help him in meeting any new enemies. Saul offered David weapons to fight with, but David refused them. They would only be a hindrance to the one who was armed of God.

How much God values faith in His human creatures. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Do we desire wonderful blessing in our lives and the lives of our loved ones? Most of the miracles of the

New Testament and many in the Old were performed as rewards of faith. God is still performing miracles today. For example, new birth is a miracle; God's care for our physical welfare (often in ways unknown to us) is a miracle; and, as one secular writer has claimed, a marriage that lasts for many years and that remains truly happy all that time is a miracle. We need faith to obtain these blessings and to appreciate them.

Do we desire victory over our spiritual enemies? We are given a list of God's provisions for Christian warfare in Ephesians 6. One verse has always stood out for me: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (verse 16). The Lord said to Peter, "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not" (Luke 22:31, 32). Faith, then, is our most important weapon in dealing with Satan and all of his devices. Like David, let us reject human solutions and fleshly weapons; and, armed with faith and the other weapons God has provided, let us go forth to meet the adversary. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

# Jonathan

## *Choosing Friends*

Jonathan is usually thought of in connection with his friendship with David; in fact, the names David and Jonathan used together have become synonymous with close friends.

David may have been still a teenager when he killed Goliath, since he was not part of Saul's army. (An Israelite

man was considered eligible for military service at age twenty, Numbers 1:3.) Jonathan was older than David since he had been active in the service of his father for some time.

Jonathan initiated the friendship with David. It would not have been in order for David, a young shepherd, to make overtures to the king's eldest son. What characteristics in David attracted Jonathan and caused his soul to be "knit with the soul of David"? (1 Samuel 18:1). He saw a handsome, strong, courageous young man. These attributes made David popular with the people, but Jonathan saw more than that in David. He saw a young man who trusted Jehovah completely and who was willing to put his life in his hands. Jonathan also had this kind of faith that he had displayed when he went up to the camp of the Philistines (1 Samuel 14). It was this shared trust in God and willingness to accept His will that bound Jonathan and David so closely together.

True friendship can occur only between people who share the same basic philosophy of life and the same moral convictions. For the Christian this means that he can only have true friendship with other Christians. If a person desires to commit every aspect of his life to the Lord, then he will find true friendship only with other people whose desires are the same. "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? and what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he who believes with an infidel?" (2 Corinthians 6:14,15). Many a Christian has suffered spiritual loss and sometimes spiritual disaster because of a poor choice of friends.

I am not saying that we should refuse all social contact with the unsaved. But to spend a great deal of time in

company with the unsaved is profitless unless much of that time can be spent in presenting Christ to them; and to enter into worldly amusements and activities with the unsaved is dangerous for both the Christian and the non-Christian. Such activities tend to divert the Christian's mind and affections from Christ and they divert the non-Christian's mind from his need of salvation. Besides this, when a Christian joins with an unsaved person in worldly activities, this gives the latter a false sense of security. The non-Christian, seeing the Christian engaging in the same activities that he (the non-Christian) engages in may think that he is not so great a sinner after all or that there cannot be anything wrong with these activities.

The devoted Christian will value friendship and communion with others of like mind, but he will never let these relationships overshadow his friendship with the Lord Jesus. He is the only perfect Friend. He is always interested in us. He is never "too busy" to listen to us. He wants us to tell Him our joys and sorrows, our victories and defeats. We can tell Him things we would not want any of our earthly friends to know. (We cannot hide anything from Him anyway.)

He wants only our blessing and He alone has the wisdom and power to arrange every detail of our lives in order to give us blessing. May each of us accept His will for us in order to partake of that blessing.

# Mephibosheth

## *Hope for the Helpless*

After his victory over Goliath, David spent several years of his life hiding from Saul, who wanted to kill him.

Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 31), and David became king over the tribe of Judah (2 Samuel 2:24). For the next seven years there was war between Saul's sons and followers and David's army. Finally, when Saul's son, Ishbosheth, was killed, all the tribes of Israel made David their king (2 Samuel 5:1-4).

Sometime later, David asked if any of Saul's descendants were still living so he could show him kindness because of the love David had had for Jonathan. The only one to be found was Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son (2 Samuel 9:1-3). Mephibosheth had been crippled since the age of five. His nurse had dropped him while fleeing from their home when news came of Jonathan's death. Even though Mephibosheth was lame, David restored to him all of Saul's and Jonathan's property and invited him to eat at the royal table. And "Mephibosheth, said the king, ...shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons" (2 Samuel 9:11).

David is often called a type of Christ, and this incident with Mephibosheth is typical of Christ's attitude towards sinners. David had suffered much from Mephibosheth's grandfather. Sometimes a new king would put to death all the relatives of a former king so that there would be no chance of those relatives plotting to regain the throne. But David treated Mephibosheth kindly because of love for him and his father. The Lord Jesus suffered at the hands of sinners. God could have judged us all because of our wickedness, but he made a way of salvation for us through the death of the Lord Jesus.

Mephibosheth was lame and could not work for David in any way. Just so, there is no way we can earn our salvation, for we are helpless sinners. We must accept it as a free gift from God, just as Mephibosheth accepted the kindness and hospitality of David. Mephibosheth ate

with David as one of the king's sons. Those of us who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour become sons of God (John 1:12) and are seated together with Christ in heaven—in the eyes of God (Ephesians 2:6).

Suppose Mephibosheth had been too proud to accept David's generosity. He would have remained poor and helpless the rest of his life. If anyone refuses to accept the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, he misses out on the joy of knowing Christ in this life and is eternally separated from Him after leaving this life. Suppose Mephibosheth had refused to recognize David as king and had tried to gain some support for himself as king, being Saul's legal heir? David would have put him to death for treason. Anyone now who refuses to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour says, in effect, "I will not have this Man to rule over me. I want to be my own king." God will judge this person throughout eternity for this revolt against His Son, the King of kings. Won't you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Lord and Saviour and enjoy all of the blessings He has for you?

## Absalom

### *What Do We Need Besides Forgiveness?*

We often hear people say, "I don't believe God would send anyone to hell, at least not forever"; or, "I believe that if people do wrong, they are punished in this life for it, and God forgives everybody after they die"; or, "Everybody will have a second chance after they die." Now we know from Scripture that none of these statements is true, but the history of Absalom shows us why God cannot simply forgive everyone.

Absalom was a handsome young man and he had a beautiful sister, Tamar. Their half brother Amnon mistreated Tamar and Absalom hated him for it. When David heard of Amnon's sin, he became very angry but did nothing about it; so Absalom had Amnon murdered. Absalom went into exile for three years. David wanted to bring back Absalom even though Absalom had sinned (2 Samuel 13).

Finally, David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, but refused to see him. Absalom found this situation intolerable, and after two years in Jerusalem he forced Joab to speak to David. David then called Absalom into his presence and kissed him. Absalom was thus restored to his position as a son of the king.

Chapters 15 through 20 of 2 Samuel record some of the saddest events in the Old Testament. Absalom stirred up a rebellion against David, David was forced to flee Jerusalem, and Absalom established himself there. Absalom was eventually killed, but there was more bloodshed before the rebellion was completely put down.

David forgave Absalom even though Absalom did not repent or express any sorrow for his sin. Absalom's desire to see the king was not motivated by love for David but because he wanted to be in a position to gather support for his own cause. Absalom had usurped David's authority when he murdered Amnon and later he wanted all of David's power and authority for himself.

Unregenerate sinners are rebels against God (Romans 8:7,8). Their primary motivation is to please themselves, not God. If they are religious sinners, they may talk about serving and worshiping God; but they are determined to do these things their own way, not God's. How can God just forgive unrepentant sinners? Absalom felt no love or

gratitude toward David in response to David's forgiveness. The unsaved would likewise feel no love or gratitude toward God if He forgave them in their unrepentant state. Their rebellion would break out in heaven itself if God were to allow them there, just as Absalom rebelled against his father after his return to Jerusalem.

No, sinners must repent and be regenerated (born again). And they must repent in this life; there will be no repentance in hell, because the Holy Spirit, who brings about repentance in the heart, will not be working there. "God ... now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). We need more than to be forgiven (spared the penalty of our sin); we need to be freed from the power of sin, to be loosed from our sins and to be given a new nature which desires to love and obey God. Only then can we be fit for God's presence and to dwell with Him forever.

# Solomon and Joash

## *Vocational Guidance*

Solomon is spoken of as being quite young when he began to reign (1 Kings 3:7; 1 Chronicles 29:1) although we are not given his exact age. He realized his inadequacies and when God asked him to make a request, Solomon chose wisdom and knowledge so that he would be able to rule God's people well (1 Kings 3; 2 Chronicles 1). God was pleased with Solomon's request and gave him what he asked for as well as what he had not asked for—riches and honor.

Joash (who began his reign at age seven) also had inadequacies. He needed the advice of someone wiser than he in order to do well. As long as his uncle, Jehoiada,

was alive, he served the Lord. When his uncle died, the weakness of his character was manifested. He turned to unwise advisers (2 Chronicles 24:17-19) who led him into idolatry. God sent prophets and Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, to tell him the Lord's will, but he ignored the prophets and murdered Zechariah. Because of his wickedness God sent the Syrians to harass Jerusalem, and Joash was assassinated by his own servants at the age of 47. How much happier he would have been if he had turned to God for wisdom and guidance when he needed it.

Solomon and Joash both knew what their life's work was to be, but they needed God's guidance to do it well. We need God's guidance to choose the right work and then His guidance to do it well. Now God knows our weaknesses and inadequacies as well as our talents and abilities. He knows for which occupation each of us is best suited. Not only do different occupations require different abilities, but different occupations present different temptations and possible hindrances to spiritual growth. If we let Him choose for us we will find work for which we are suited, and we will avoid situations that could be disastrous to our spirituality. The place He chooses may not give us much worldly status, but it will be the place in which we can best serve Him.

Most Christians will acknowledge that we should look to God to direct us in what is usually called "the Lord's work." Fewer think it is necessary to look to God for direction as to our "secular work." But the devoted Christian should not have sacred and secular compartments in his or her life. He should be serving God whether he is making tents or preaching the gospel. There should be no such person as a "part-time servant of the Lord." The attitude of those who derive their living from a "secular" occupation should be

as follows: “Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Ephesians 6:5,6). God can help us solve all of the problems we meet with in our work. If we seek His guidance moment by moment throughout the day, our work will go much more smoothly.

We should be serving God in every activity of our lives. If there is any activity in which we do not serve God, we should abandon this activity. Every aspect of our lives should be a means of glorifying the Lord Jesus.

# Hezekiah

## *Who Is Responsible?*

You can't help it if your life is not what it should be. Your parents, teachers, and general environment have made you what you are, right? No, Hezekiah's life says, “Wrong!”

Like many of the kings of Judah, Hezekiah was a young man when he began his reign. His reign was characterized by his devotion to the Lord; and it was especially remarkable because Hezekiah began his service to the Lord without any hesitation—in the very first month of his reign. It would seem that Hezekiah had become thoroughly disgusted with the abominations that went on during the reign of his father Ahaz, and so he set about to do away with them as soon as he could (2 Kings 18).

Hezekiah's life is a testimony against the philosophy so prevalent today—that young people who go wrong are not responsible for their misdeeds; that they are victims of neurotic, hypocritical parents or lack of education or

a poor environment. If anyone ever had such an excuse, Hezekiah would have. His father had engaged in gross idolatry, everyone around him engaged in the same, his father was immature when Hezekiah was born, and only his mother (if anyone) had set him a good example. But Hezekiah realized that God will not accept excuses. He holds everyone responsible for his own actions. Hezekiah set to work immediately to carry out God's will.

I am not trying to minimize the responsibility of parents to raise their children for the Lord, nor am I trying to deny that many parents have not properly carried out their responsibilities for one reason or another. But even if our parents have done everything wrong, God expects us to obey Him—to obey Him while we are young.

If we are open to God's will for us, God can use the failures of our parents for our blessing. By observing their weaknesses we can become better parents ourselves. We can also be more sensitive to the needs of others who have had experiences similar to ours.

God has a place for each of us in His Church, and all of our experiences are designed by Him to fit us for that place. By blaming our parents for our problems and refusing to submit to God, we miss out on the highest blessings He has in mind for us.

# Josiah

## *Worthy Ambition*

There are several lessons for young people to be learned from the life of Josiah. Although he was King of Judah for 31 years, he was a relatively young man when he died, being only 39 years old.

We are not told anything about the first eight years of Josiah's reign. They were very important years for Josiah (and the nation of Israel) because at the end of that time "he began to seek after the God of David his father" (2 Chronicles 34:3). What factors influenced him to turn to the God of his fathers when most of the nation had turned from God to idols? It probably was not the actual reading of God's Word, since it appears that Josiah saw his first copy of the law when one was discovered in the temple during the eighteenth year of his reign. Perhaps it was the influence of his mother or some other godly person. At any rate, Josiah was only sixteen years old when he turned to God. Josiah did not put off the most important decision of his life. Although Josiah's life was fairly short, he had several years to serve the Lord because he turned to Him when he was young. None of us knows how many years we will have on this earth. Let us not waste any of them or risk losing eternal life altogether by waiting to accept Christ "until we are older."

Four years after Josiah began to seek after God he began his work of purging Judah from idolatry. He did not rush into a great work before his heart was well-established in the fear and love of God. All Christians need to undergo a period of waiting on the Lord in order to learn God's will for them and to become firmly rooted in the principles of His Word before they take up any special work for Him. The length of this period will vary for each individual, depending on the person's age and maturity at the time of his conversion, the amount of Scriptural teaching he may have absorbed as a child, and how fast a learner he is in God's school. Four years may seem like a long apprenticeship, but Josiah was still only twenty when he began his work. We are not saying that a

young Christian should go for years without confessing his Saviour or giving the gospel to anyone; far be the thought! But we need to be well-established before we begin any public ministry.

Having set out upon his work, however, he let nothing stand in his way. Some of the abominations he took away had been established by Solomon and had been around for hundreds of years. Josiah did not bow to the traditions of men nor did he attempt to cultivate the approval of his contemporaries. He was concerned only with God's approval and with serving Him. He was diligent and did his work thoroughly. He ground the images and altars into dust and even burned the bones of priests who had conducted the false worship. (A more complete account of his work is given in 2 Kings 23.) Let us follow his example in the conduct of the work which God has given or will give us to do. Let us do diligently and thoroughly what God has given us to do and look only to Him for approval.

It took Josiah six years to purge the land, but he did not retire from active service for the Lord when this was done. His next project was the restoration of the temple and the worship associated with it. During this period of his life we see Josiah's reaction to the Word of God when he became acquainted with its precepts. Josiah took it to heart; he applied it to himself first. He might have contrasted his own behavior with that of the people around him and comforted himself with the thoughts of his superior morality. But instead, he humbled himself before God and rent his clothes. When we see ourselves in the light of the Word of God and measure ourselves by God's standard, there is no room for self-congratulation. After Josiah had heard God's Word read and expounded, he made sure the people heard it. Anyone who is truly convinced of the

reality of the promises and warnings in God's Word will want to share them with others. They are too important to keep to ourselves. Finally, Josiah based his worship and the order of the temple on God's Word. He celebrated the passover as God had commanded. We cannot worship God on our own terms; we must come to Him on His terms. There is no room in Scripture for personal preference or "doing one's own thing" in the manner of our worship. To attempt to tell God that we know what He desires better than He does is blasphemy.

We now come to Josiah's death. This is the first time the lesson to be learned from Josiah is a negative one. From 2 Chronicles 35:20 we may infer that Josiah had finished restoring the temple before his death. He was an energetic man of action and he was looking for a new project. Alas, he did not look to God for directions, but undertook a military campaign in direct disobedience to the revealed will of God. The result was his death and the beginning of the fall of the kingdom of Judah. It is good to be energetic and ambitious, but let us be energetic in carrying out God's will, and not ours; and let us be ambitious for the increase of God's glory, and not ours. If we desire blessing rather than disaster, we must obey God.

## Daniel and His Companions

*Young Men of Prayer*

Daniel and his companions (known best as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) probably were taken to Babylon in their early teens. (They are called "children" but they

were old enough to know God's law and to decide to obey it. See Daniel 1.) Daniel lived many years in Babylon— years full of service to God and man. The most famous incident in Daniel's life, his sojourn in the lions' den because of his determination to continue praying only to God occurred when he was an old man. I would like to point out in this chapter that Daniel and his companions were men of prayer while still young.

In Daniel 2 we read that the king had had a dream that he could not understand, and neither could he recall it. None of his wise men could tell Nebuchadnezzar the content of his dream, so he ordered them all to be killed. This edict evidently included Daniel and his companions, even though the king had not asked them to help him (Daniel 2:13-16). What was Daniel's first step in finding the answer to the problem? He and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego prayed. They were not only praying for the knowledge of the king's dream; they were praying for their lives. What was Daniel's first step after receiving the interpretation of the dream? He prayed again! Only then did he go to tell the king what he had learned. Daniel was a man of prayer all through his life. God rewarded him: "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Daniel 1:17).

Would you like to have knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom? Do you have any problems with school or college studies or with your job? Daniel's secret of success can be yours—he prayed and so should you. The author knows from personal experience that God understands not only dreams and visions and the arts and sciences of ancient Egypt and Babylon, but also physics, organic chemistry, calculus, and economics. Prayer can

provide very practical help in our work and our studies. Ask God to show you just what to study and what parts of the material to spend the most time on. If you get bogged down in the middle of an exam, take a moment out for prayer; ask God to clear your mind and help you recall the material relevant to the problem. (It is not recommended that one substitute prayer for study. The Book of Proverbs definitely states that God does not reward laziness in any form. Prayer and study must be used together.)

After one has finished school and is established in a job, prayer is a great aid in one's work. God can not only help us get along with our fellow workers, but can also provide help with very technical problems. God is the Creator of the material universe and will help us deal with this creation if we act in subjection to and dependence on Him.

## The Virgin Mary

### *Is Premarital Chastity Important?*

The world says, "If two people love each other, then any display of affection is proper between them." Does God approve of this attitude? Perhaps a study of the Virgin Mary will help us understand God's view of the proper relationships for couples who are in love or engaged to be married.

From studying the marriage customs of the time, most scholars believe Mary was still a teenager when Jesus was born. She was evidently not only a girl of high moral standards, but also had a vital relationship with God. (Would that all the Christian teenage girls today could sing Mary's song of Luke 1:46-55 from their own experience of God.)

Mary could never have been chosen as the mother of the Messiah if she had been influenced by the thinking that characterizes the world today—and has even influenced many Christians—that if two people are in love or engaged to be married, then any sort of physical demonstration of their love is acceptable. God honored Mary's purity and He will honor all young men and women who wish to please Him by remaining virgins before marriage, by helping them achieve truly happy marriages.

A truly happy marriage can only be achieved when there is a oneness of spirit as well as a oneness of the affections and of the body. Our spirit is that part of our being which is capable of responding to God. It also includes the conscience and our ability to make moral decisions. The truest intimacy and oneness of spirit occurs when the spirits of both persons are drawn very close to God and thus they are drawn close to one another. In the measure that the spirits of both persons are subject to the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in that measure there will be agreement and oneness between them.

Now the time to begin building this spiritual unity is before marriage and even before engagement. A physical relationship is only really meaningful as it expresses spiritual unity. A Christian couple should not plan to marry until they have laid a good foundation for marriage by developing a spiritual relationship and know that they can help each grow closer to God as the years go by.

Premature entry into an intimate physical relationship short circuits the development of a real spiritual relationship in several ways. First, the intimacy is physically and emotionally exciting and the couple loses interest in spiritual matters. Second, the fact that their relationship is a secret between the two of them which they try to conceal

from others may make them feel a certain closeness and loyalty to each other. They may mistake this closeness for real unity of spirit, but it will fade away when marriage makes their relationship “respectable” and there is no need to conceal it. They no longer will share a secret and they will find they share little else of real meaning. Third, since they are not pleasing God, they cannot become closer to Him while out of communion with Him. Fourth, the feelings of guilt which their behavior may arouse will tend to interfere with the development of real intimacy after marriage. God will bless those couples who use dating and engagement periods for the development of spiritual and emotional unity and save physical intimacy for marriage. They will have not only spiritual intimacy but a truly joyous physical relationship as well.

Marriage is a type of the union between Christ and His Church. This “Church age” is actually the Church’s engagement period; the marriage ceremony will not take place until after the rapture (Revelation 19:7). The apostle Paul said of the Church at Corinth, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). How beautiful and pleasing to God when a Christian couple’s relations with each other before and after marriage truly typify the union of Christ and His Church.

## Jesus at Age Twelve

### *Perfect Spiritual Development*

We hesitate to include our Lord Jesus in this book because He is God as well as man and is therefore infinitely higher than any mere human. However, His life is to be

our example (1 Peter 2:21) and perhaps a few thoughts on the Lord Jesus as a young Person may be helpful to young (and older) readers.

Even before the age of twelve the Lord Jesus “waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom” (Luke 2:40). Too often our spiritual development or the spiritual development of our children is allowed to lag behind physical, mental, and social development. God made us to be primarily spiritual beings, since it is by the spirit that we can know God. The Lord Jesus was developing His spirit in those years.

At twelve years of age boys were allowed to take part in the religious ceremonies of Israel, so the Lord Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover. When His parents left for Nazareth, He remained behind in the temple. The thoroughness of His spiritual development is seen in the reaction of the doctors: “All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47). Now we know He was God and so had knowledge we can never have; yet is this not a lesson to us to be diligent in the study of God’s Word while we are young?

Perhaps the most instructive part of this chapter is in verses 51 and 52: “And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them ... and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” If the Creator of the universe was subject to His earthly parents, should not we be subject to ours? They certainly did not understand Him, but He obeyed them anyway. The Lord Jesus continued to grow (verse 52) and gave no cause for complaint to anyone. Let us imitate Him as much as possible.

Some may have wondered why the Lord Jesus stayed behind in the temple without telling His parents. Here is where we cannot follow Him, for as God He could give His

earthly parents spiritual instruction, whereas it might be most inappropriate for us to do so. We can be assured that what He did was God's will for Him at that moment. Perhaps God directed the Lord Jesus to do this in order to stir up Mary and Joseph. From their actions and response (verses 48, 50) we see that they had forgotten, at least in part, the true identity of their Son. They had grown accustomed to treating Him like an ordinary child. For their own spiritual benefit they needed to see Him as He really was. (Throughout the life of Christ and up to the present day, Satan has been very active in trying to convince people that Jesus was just an ordinary man. Only when we believe that He was God manifest in flesh is there any hope of salvation.) Everything the Lord Jesus said or did was according to the will of God and was directed toward the glory of the Father and the physical or spiritual welfare of some person. May this be the motivation for all of our actions.

# Timothy

## *An Example for His Elders*

We first meet Timothy in Acts 16. Paul was in the course of his second missionary trip. Evidently Timothy had been converted when Paul had first visited Lystra. He was well spoken of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium and Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him on his journey.

Timothy not only accompanied Paul, he was sent to various places as Paul's representative (1 Corinthians 16:10, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8). Timothy continued as Paul's representative after Paul was in prison (Philippians 2:19-23). In this last passage we learn why Paul trusted

Timothy as his representative and messenger. “I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all [others] seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ’s.” Many of Paul’s other acquaintances had evidently left their first love and zeal for the Lord to settle down in the world.

Paul’s epistles to Timothy give good advice to all young Christian people. “Let no man despise your youth; but be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). There would be no “youth problem” if all young people (and older ones) followed the precepts of this verse and if young people determined to set an example of holiness to all believers. The first two verses of 1 Timothy 5 show the attitude a young person should have toward other people: “Rebuke not an elder sharply, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brethren, elder women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with purity” (Darby Translation).

“Flee also youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22). Many people think of “youthful lusts” as being primarily sexual; yet desire for wealth and a great name in the world are also associated with youth. In 1 Timothy 6:11, Timothy is specifically told to flee the latter.

Examples are given of ways in which young people may use their abundant energy—as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, as a runner in the race for heavenly rewards, and as a hard-working farmer who sows the seed of God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:3-6).

Timothy was imprisoned at some time in his life (Hebrews 13:23), but we know nothing of what became of him after Paul’s death. No doubt he continued to care for God’s people and to “do the work of an evangelist” (2

Timothy 4:5) as long as he remained on this earth. Let us all follow Timothy's example and heed Paul's instructions to this young man.

