

What Every Young Person Needs to Know

The following is from a two-part class taught at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, VA. (<http://www.ipcnorfolk.org>)

Introduction

The title of this short series is “What Every Young Person Needs to Know.” Our goal is to set forth the most important things that a young Christian man and a young Christian woman should know by the time they leave home. We want to have a comprehensive understanding of the things that are essential for a young person to have fixed in their minds *before* they leave the home.

As we start, let me ask, to whom is this applicable? Well, to begin with, this material is obviously applicable to parents. Parents, for what are you aiming as you raise your children? Some parents are aiming for nothing – they just go through their daily routine, week after week, year after year, and then suddenly, little Johnny or little Suzy turns 18 and is leaving home. It is my hope that this material will serve to help and encourage parents to set the right goals for what their children know before they leave the home.

So this class seeks to clearly enumerate some of the most important things that a young person needs to know before leaving the home. So you older people here tonight, I encourage you to take these points and take interest in the rising generation. Invest yourself – engage them in spiritual conversation. You younger people – take these points and take advantage of the resources you have in the older Christians here. Seek counsel, seek input from the older believers in your lives, here in this church.

Now, let me tell you what this series will *not* be. This is not a class about the mechanics of life skills. We will not talk about the importance of looking both ways before crossing the street. We will not talk about how to cook

healthy meals for yourself. We will not talk about how to operate the various inventions and devices that we interact with on a day-to-day basis.

In addition, this class will not give a fully developed treatment of each of the things that a young person needs to know. This class is a survey. It will be broad and cursory.

Furthermore, this class is not going to be an exhaustive survey of everything important that you need to know. This series will not cover every single thing that a young person needs to know before leaving home. We are only going to touch on some of the *most* important things.

The importance of this series

Now, before we get to the heart of this material, let me briefly dwell on the purpose of this series. Why study this topic?

Let me tell you a story. This is a sad story. It’s the story of a family. Let’s call this family the Jones family. They seemed like responsible citizens. They were on good terms with all of their neighbors. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were God-fearing parents. They seemed to be very devoted to the local assembly of believers.

Now, Mr. and Mrs. Jones had several children. They provided for their children’s housing, and food, and clothing needs. They made sure their children received a normal education, comparable to that of their peers. They brought their children up, taking them to the Church meetings every week.

Now as their children grew up, became adults, and began to leave home, one by one, a pattern started to emerge. When their first one left home, he settled down, got married, but didn’t really have much interest in attending worship once he was on his own. When the second one left home, she also settled down, got married, but ended up with some very different beliefs from her parents about worship, about the Lord’s Day, and about marriage.

This is a story that happened a million times... thousands of years ago... in Israel. For every faithful generation which sought the Lord, which worshipped the Lord in accordance with His work, which kept and obeyed His commandments, there very quickly arose a generation that wandered away from what their parents believed.

Judges 2:7-13 ⁷ So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel... ¹⁰ When all that generation had been gathered to their

fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ¹² and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³ They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Brothers and sisters, you need to understand that this is *our* family history. This is the pattern that repeats over and over throughout Biblical history. We are susceptible to this. This could happen to us, to *this* church, to *our* families.

Here is how it happens: On one hand you have the parents' faith, and on the other hand you have the children's faith, and the two are not the same. The parents' faith is not passed on to their children. Could it be some of you sitting in this room tonight will grow up and be that generation that wanders away from the Lord? Could some of you sitting in this room grow up and end up holding to a very different doctrine than that of your parents?

This is why this series is important. Parents, what are your goals for your children? What specific, tangible goals are you aiming for? Are your children going to be like King Josiah?

2 Kings 22:1-2 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ² And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Look at this young man Josiah... He fully followed the ways of his ancestor David. That's what you want for your children.

Those of you who are on the verge of leaving home, take heed, and ask yourself as we go through this series, "Is *this* what I believe?" And if you find that you are not grounded in any of these areas, apply yourself. Get grounded!

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

What you want to know, what you should want your children to know, how does it get there? How do those essential things that you want your children

to believe get there? Osmosis? Paul exhorts Timothy to be diligent, to study the Scriptures in order to be properly equipped for his life's work. This is what it will take. The application for us is this: If we do not properly train and equip our children, and if the Holy Spirit does not apply this work to their hearts, then the next generation will wander from the Lord. The next generation will hold different doctrinal positions from their parents.

A young person must know their purpose in life

The first thing a young person must know is this: A young person must know their purpose in life. Let me ask each of you in this room, what is your purpose in life? What would you say if I were to put you on the spot right now and ask you to tell me, what is your purpose in life?

To be honest, many people live their life without a purpose. They simply exist. They just follow a routine, until the day they die.

But other people do live life consciously, with a purpose. For some people, their purpose is to make their physical and emotional surroundings comfortable. They seek to have a comfortable home, they seek to have a nice set of friends, they seek to have achievements and recognition.

But if you, sitting here in this room, are a Christian, what is your purpose in life *supposed* to be? Your purpose in life is: To glorify God... and to enjoy Him forever.

Now in this church, you have often heard that Shorter Catechism question and answer quoted. You can quote it yourself. But I ask you, is that your purpose in life? Do you consciously live for the purpose of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever? Or are you living to look good outwardly, to be handsome or beautiful or stylish? Are your energies and desires all focused on maintaining a *comfortable* life?

There is a big difference between *knowing* the right answer versus *living* the right answer.

1 Corinthians 10:31 ³¹ Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Matthew 5:16 ¹⁶ "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

1 Corinthians 6:20 ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Do these verses stir you? Do they resonate with your heart and do you inwardly say, "Yes, yes! That's what I really want to do, most of all, more than anything else! I want to bring glory to Jesus Christ!"

A life devoted to glorifying God and enjoying God is more than going to church. It is your mind, heart, soul and strength focused on this purpose. Your *mind* is oriented so that in all of your thoughts, you are thinking about God and what He would have you think. Your *heart* is oriented so that all of your desires are oriented towards Christ and the things of the Lord. Your *soul* is oriented so that its deepest satisfaction and delight is in fellowship with God the Father and Christ the Son dwelling in your heart. Your *strength* is spent in pursuing Godliness, good works, eternal things. Here's a very simple question. What things make you happy in your life? Things? People? Getting a bonus at work? Or is it the Lord -- closer fellowship with Him, advancement in your sanctification, and the salvation of the lost?

If you're living to glorify and enjoy God, when you're doing your studies, when you're laboring in your job, you'll be able to stop and pause, even in the stressful times, and think to yourself, "Why am I doing this?" And you'll be able to answer yourself, "I'm in this class, I'm in this company, I'm doing this job, to glorify the Lord. And my long term plan is to be with Him forever."

Do you see the difference? The worldling is doing his work to earthly purposes – to look good, to gain friends, to get that promotion. The worldling's long term goal is not heaven and fellowship with Christ. The worldling has nothing higher than *this* life.

What does it mean to glorify and enjoy God? It has nothing to do with being religious. It has everything to do with what you honestly treasure and pursue. A young person must know their purpose in life.

A young person must know how to be right with God and know how to communicate that to others

Now secondly, I say that a young person must know *how to be right with God and how to communicate that truth to others*. Young people and older people, if I were to put you on the spot and ask you right here to stand up and tell me, "What can you do to be right with God?", what would you say? What must a man do to be right with God? Can you answer that question?

The answer to this is found in the Gospel. **Romans 1:16** says, "...the gospel of Christ...[is]... the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." But what is the Gospel? Do you know how to explain the Gospel?

- All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23)
- There is none righteous, not even one. (Rom 3:10)
- For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
- Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
- Repent, and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15)
- Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, (Acts 16:31)

You may not have memorized all of those verses (though you *should* have them memorized), but you must be able to at least recount those basic points of the Gospel in your own words. The Gospel is the one thing that differentiates Christianity from cults and false religions. If you *cannot* at least recount those basic points of the Gospel in your own words... if you cannot do this, how can you call yourself a Christian?

Too many Christians, when they are given a situation where they can bring the gospel to bear in a conversation or in a letter, they find themselves unprepared. The Bible tells us to *always* be ready. **2 Timothy 4:2** Be ready in season *and* out of season.. Why? Well, it may be that you get a golden opportunity, where some distressed or ill friend or relative comes to you and flat out asks, "Why do you go to church? What's this Christianity stuff all about? Can you tell me about your religion? What do they believe at your

church?” Those opportunities do come, and they are usually rare. You want to be prepared so that you don’t miss that opportunity to bring the good news!

But perhaps more realistically, the gospel also relates to many conversations that we have. I can remember directly after the attack on 9/11, waiting in line in a store and being able to talk to strangers in the store about mortality. “Everyone has to die sometime.” Most unbelievers are free and open to talk about that. And that topic, your mortality, very easily leads to the gospel. You stand there with strangers in a store, or perhaps with your co-workers or fellow student, hearing about the news about the tragic deaths on the space shuttle, or the overwhelming tragedy. And if you’re ready, you can say, “I’d be so scared to die like that, but I know there is a God and that Jesus has saved me.”

But it doesn’t have to only be in conversations about death and tragedy. You young people, you should be ready to bring up the gospel, or even just parts of the gospel when someone is tempting you. I’ve had several situations where I’ve been in casual conversation with unbelievers, and they start talking about some pornography that they greatly enjoyed. I’m sorry to say that in those situations, I didn’t know what to say. In one instance, one of my professors asked me if I knew how to find pornography on the internet for him. I remember weakly saying something like, “I wouldn’t want to do that”, or something like that that did little to point the man to Christ. I remember another time being in a store where a sales clerk mentioned how there were some great videos with women in swimsuits. I remember just trying to be polite and smoothly changing the subject. But, later, I thought, “I missed an opportunity to bring up aspects of the Gospel.” If I had been more heavenly minded, I might have said something like, “Those videos sound very tempting and enjoyable. But in reality, they are harmful. They only lead to death. Porn is destructive.” Or perhaps I might have said, “As much as one part of me would like to see those videos, another part of me would hate to see them, because I have been purchased by Jesus. He changed my desires and my heart so that I understand that watching those kinds of videos would be sin. How can I sin against Him?” Wouldn’t saying something like that be so much better than merely changing the subject?

Look at Joseph – a woman was trying to seduce him. What does he do? He doesn’t just say “No, thanks.” He says, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (**Genesis 39:9**) He brings God into the picture. He testifies of His God. He calls sin *sin*.

Now you might think, “Oh, but if I did that at work or with the neighbors, that would be too direct. It would be socially awkward. They’d think I’m a religious nut.” Wait a minute. But aren’t you supposed to be a religious nut, in the world’s eyes? We’re not trying to look respectable to the world. We’re trying to look like Christians, and the Lord told us that Christianity, *true* Christianity will look like foolishness to the world. As so, if you’re not looking foolish to the world, what does that say? Could it be an indication that you are hiding your Saviour. You’re keeping him hidden under your coat, only to be pulled out when you’re at church?

And so I say that a young person must know how to be right with God and know how to communicate that to others

A young person must be able to give a personal testimony of their God and their salvation

The third thing that is essential for every young person is this: A young person must be able to give a personal testimony of their God and their salvation.

Too many young people assume they are saved, but in reality have never come to Christ in faith and repentance. Too many young people assume they are Christians, when in fact they are not. Over the past ten years, Gallup polls have found that 40%-50% of all Americans claim to be “born again” or “evangelical”. My brothers and sisters, do you really believe 40-50% of the people in this country are saved, and yet in the last thirty years we have legalized abortion, legalized partial-birth abortion, and accepted homosexuality in our culture?

When you ask these people *why* they consider themselves evangelical or “born again”, let me hazard a guess as to what they would say. Some would say, “Well, I go to church.” But going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than living in a chicken house would make you a chicken. Others might say, “Well, it’s the way I was raised. My parents are evangelical, and so I guess I am, too.” You do realize, don’t you, that just because *your parents* are Christians, it doesn’t mean that *you* are right with God and that *you* are going to heaven. *Salvation is not a hereditary*

condition. Still others might say, “Well, when I was young, I heard some powerful preaching and I responded to an altar call at the end, so I guess I am born again.” To that we say, walking down an aisle, speaking certain words in prayers, these are mere works, and works alone cannot save you.

Now, maybe some of those people are saved. But maybe they are not. Here’s what you should be able to recount as your personal testimony of your salvation:

“At a certain point in my life, I was convicted of my sin. I realized that I was guilty and deserved to be punished by God. I realized that I deserve to be sent to Hell. But I also realized that Jesus... died on the cross in my place. My sins were punished when He died. Jesus rose from the dead. My guilt was taken away. His good deeds were put on my account, and now I am forgiven and guiltless before God. He changed my heart. I am a new creation. I hate my sin. I am seeking to love and obey Jesus as His disciple.”

Now the circumstances of how that conviction of sin, that repentance, and that faith and obedience appeared in your life will be different for each of us. For some of you, it will have happened and began from the time you were a little child. Others may have been saved when they were older, perhaps as a result of providentially arranged circumstances, books, conversations, sermons, and so forth. But each you here who claim to be a Christian must be able to personally testify about how God has worked conviction, repentance, faith, and obedience in your hearts.

Knowledge of the Gospel vs. Experience of the Gospel

And here, brothers and sisters, be sure you know the difference between knowing *about* the Gospel, and *knowing Christ*. There is a world of difference between Christ *the concept* and *Christ your brother*. Do you realize there are many religious people who can accurately explain the gospel, yet they themselves have never *experienced* the transforming power of the Gospel in their own lives?

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 gives a good picture of what happens when a person *experiences* the work of the gospel in their life:

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 ⁵ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His

Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

If you have salvation, it is not a concept. It is a vital experience. If the seed of the gospel has been planted in your heart, and it took root, there are fruits of salvation in your life.

A close call

Let me also ask you this. Are you gripped by your salvation? If you are saved, do you realize that it was a close call? You almost didn’t make it! Do you realize that you were *just barely* saved?

Jude 1:23 ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

1 Peter 4:18 Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

These verses are telling you that you almost didn’t survive. Your salvation is as if you *just barely* caught the bus. It is as if you were driving down the highway at 60 miles per hours and your car skidded, flipped and rolled over three or four times, and then you crawled out of the broken window, perfectly unharmed. It is a miracle that you survived and were saved.

That’s how your salvation is! It is a *miracle* that you were saved.

When you’ve had such a near miss, and near accident, you know what your natural response is. You’re filled with relief. You’re filled with gratitude. You rejoice. You want to tell people about it. You want people to know.

So it is with those Jesus has rescued. We rejoice. We are filled with relief, with amazement, and with gratitude. And we want to tell others what God has done for us. If you find that your salvation does not stir you, that it does not thrill you, then you need to do some serious thinking and self-examination.

And so, we have seen that a young person must know their purpose in life. A young person must know how to be right with God and know how to communicate that to others. A young person must be able to give a personal testimony of their God and their salvation.

A young person must know the elements of Christian character and be conscious of areas where growth is needed

Fourthly, a young person must know the elements of Christian character and be conscious of areas where growth is needed in their own life. In other words, as a Christian, you should have a picture in your mind of what you want to be like. I'm not talking about hairstyles, clothing fashions, or physical characteristics. I'm talking about *character*. I'm talking about what the Bible calls *Godliness*. In your mind, you should have an increasingly accurate, Scripturally informed picture of the character of Christ, and that mental image should be your goal.

When you think of Jesus, you should think of His humility, and you should think, "I want to be like that!"

When you think of Jesus, you should think of His love and His willingness to serve others, and you should think, "I want to be like that!"

When you think of Jesus, you should think of His overriding desire to obey and please the Heavenly Father, and you should think, "I want to be like that!"

And when you think of *yourself*, you should be yearning, "How can I be more like Jesus? Oh God, change me, increase my sanctification! Make me more like my Saviour Jesus!"

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.

Paul's goal, and your goal, should be to imitate Jesus. To copy Jesus. To look like Jesus.

Do you want to be a godly man? Do you want to be a godly woman? Great! What needs to change *in your life* in order for you to be more godly?

And so, you should be regularly noticing those sins that need to be put to death. When you do well, and men are praising you and you think, "What a swell and praiseworthy fellow I am", you should notice pride in your life and instead pursue humility. When that irritating person in your life does something that vexes you, you should notice unrighteous anger and hatred in

your life, and instead pursue love and patience and forbearance. You should notice selfishness and self-indulgence, and instead pursue self-control and self-discipline.

A young person must be able to discern and diagnose sinful thoughts and actions in his or her daily life.

Now this is something that is never fully accomplished in a Christian's life. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, who reveals these things to us. The Spirit reveals your motives. The Spirit convicts you of sin.

1 Corinthians 2:10-11 For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Now, if you are not a Christian, you do not have the Holy Spirit. You are *self-willed*. But, if you are a Christian, you do have the Holy Spirit, and you are led... *by the Spirit*. And it is the Holy Spirit who empowers you to repent and to overcome temptation.

Romans 8:13 ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Fruits of the Spirit

And so, a young person must know the elements of Christian character and be conscious of areas where growth is needed

Summary

We've covered quite a bit of material and there's much more in next week's class. In conclusion, let me say that my goal in this series is to stir you to set a goal – a godly goal – for where you will be, or where you should be. We have a beautiful and precious treasure. **2 Corinthians 4:6** says that God has "has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He has warmed our hearts. He has given us light when we were lost in the darkness! He has come near to us! It is wonderful.

The next verse goes on to say, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” Ah, we have this treasure, but it is in earthen vessels – our diamonds, our rubies, our precious treasure is in a container made of dirt. *We* are those lowly containers that possess a priceless treasure.

Why do we want young people to know these things? As we know these things that every young person must know, this treasure becomes more precious to us. We’re made to understand the depth and the height and breadth of the treasure. And as we know these things that every young person must know, this treasure becomes more visible to the world. Christ is lifted up and exalted, not only in our hearts, but also before men. And finally, as we know these things that every young person must know, we, these vessels made of clay, are increasingly transformed and made to be vessels of glory.

So I exhort you, *apply yourselves* to know these things.

A young person must know how to war against sin

Our first point this week is this: A young person must know how to war against sin in his or her life. Last week we talked about Christian character, and being aware of the areas where you need to grow and be more Christ-like. *This* point specifically addresses that battle against temptation and sin that characterizes every true believer.

For every young person, the particular points of temptation will be different. For some it will be lust, for others it may be envy or discontentment, for others it will be pride or anger. But whatever your particular temptations are, you as a believer are in a war.

Regarding this war against sin, I want to say three things:

First of all, your life will be regularly marked with something like a frustration and grief about a particular sin that you are battling. There is a constant yearning and anguish in the life of a believer. Romans 7 very clearly depicts this struggle. Listen to how it is described in

Romans 7:19-24 ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not

to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Do you see the anguish and frustration that accompanies the fight against sin? “O wretched man that I am!”

Secondly, you who are believers, this struggle against your own sins should be a *conscious reality* in your daily life. How will you fight against the temptations that are brought to you day by day, not only from your flesh, but also from the world and the devil? The devil would like nothing more than to ensnare you in sin without you even being aware of it. Be alert and stay in the fight. War against sin! Gird yourself! This war will not end until you die.

Thirdly, what are the weapons of your warfare? How will you fight against sin? This is an area to which you should be devoting your time and energies. For your various temptations, there are helps and remedies, specific to each one. But it requires you to apply yourself. 1 Corinthians 10:13 promises that with every temptation, God will make a way of escape. The way of escape from temptation may be quite costly. But there will always be a way of escape. Romans 7 ends saying, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord”, the one who gives us victory against sin.

So I say that a young person must know how to war against sin.

A young person must know how to live a pure life, distinct from the world

Now secondly, I say that a young person must know how to live a pure life, distinct from the world. As a believer, God calls you to live a pure and holy life.

1 Peter 1:13-16 ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you

is holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

That is to say, *be like God* in all aspects of your life. Don't be like the people in the world that live around you. Don't try to fit in with them. Don't unthinkingly accept whatever the world will tell you is alright or good. In James 1:27 we're commanded to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world." The things of the world can taint you. The world cannot take away your salvation, but the world can draw your heart away from the Lord. We see this in

James 4:4 ⁴ ... Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

We're warned that as we love the world, it will squeeze out the Love of God.

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This means you will look noticeably different from those around you in your community and your workplace. In your choice of friends, your choice of music and movies, your conversation, your character, even the way you dress, *you must be different from the world* at every point where it is unholy or where it would draw you away from the Lord. Here is how you should evaluate things in your life:

Philippians 4:8 ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.

Should I read this and such book? Is it true? Is it noble? Is it pure? Is it of good report? Is it virtuous or praiseworthy? Should I watch this and such movie? It's only rated *this*? Well, God says to be holy? Would it be compatible with holiness? Or will it instead increase my love of the world? How will these things affect my thinking? Will this make me more tolerant of sin, or will it increase my hatred of sin? Hebrews 11 tells us to cast of sin *and* any thing that would be an encumbrance – cast of things that will slow

you down in your pursuit of Christ. Watching TV is not necessarily a sin, depending on what you watch. But it can be an encumbrance, a weight, that will drag you down spiritually.

Now note that you will not get any help from the world in this. Worldly schools, worldly friends, the media, all will mock you should you decide that this or that choice of activities is impure or unsuitable for a believer in Christ. As so, a young person must know how to live pure and holy life, distinct from the world.

A young person must know how to cultivate a daily time of seeking the Lord

Now, thirdly I say that a young person must know how to cultivate a daily time of seeking the Lord. A young person must know how to spend dedicated time with the Lord each day. Yes, it is true, that you should pray at all times, but following the example of Jesus, you should also take some time each day to draw away from other people and from distractions in order to spend time with the Lord.

Mark 1:35 ³⁵ Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

The purpose of such a habit is not to appear religious. The purpose in daily devotions is not even to *do* religious things. The purpose is to cultivate your relationship with God. The purpose is to seek the Lord *and find Him*. Look at how David expresses it.

Psalms 42:2 ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

In each of us who have been born again, we have new hearts. *From* those new hearts, a love for the Lord springs up. We desire to be near Him. And as we draw near to the Lord, He promises to draw near to us. **James 4:8** ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Your devotional time is a time when you draw near to God, and He draws near to you.

A well-rounded time of personal devotions consists self-examination, praise, prayer, reading, and meditation on the Lord. It is to be a two-way time. A

time in which we express our love to God, and a time in which we receive and perceive the love that God has towards us.

Your devotional time will go through periods of dryness, but you must persevere in seeking the Lord, by His strength. It takes love for the Lord, but it also takes self-discipline. Those of you who have not established a devotional habit, I encourage you to persevere. Keeping working at setting aside this time, brief though it may be.

So we have looked at how a young person must know how to war against sin. We have looked at how a young person must know how to live a pure life, distinct from the world. We have looked at how a young person must know how to cultivate a daily time of seeking the Lord.

A young person must be conscious of the authority of Scripture over his or her personal life

Fourthly, a young person be conscious of the authority of Scripture over his or her personal life. This is one thing that makes a Christian very different from a non-Christian. The Christian is conscientiously trying to follow the principles and commands contained in the Bible. The Bible is the foundation of the Christian's thinking.

When a Christian is trying to decide, "Should I spend this much money on a new car?", he asks himself, "What Scriptures would help inform me in making this decision?" When a Christian is trying to determine whom should I marry, she asks herself, "What verses would help me determine the right man?" When a Christian is trying to understand science, or the arts, or sociology, or current events, he asks himself, "What does the Bible say about this topic?"

In any area, a Christian is to be *captive* to the Scriptures. If the Bible says it, I will *believe* it. If the Bible says to do something, I will humbly *obey* it, even if it looks like foolishness to the World.

Psalm 119:160 ¹⁶⁰ The entirety of Your word *is* truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.

In all of your decision-making, your goal should be to have the mind of Christ, as it is revealed by the Spirit in the Word of God.

Now in contrast to that, how does the world make decisions? An unbeliever or a foolish believer will use one of a combination of these principles in decision making, in setting priorities. One primary principle used in worldly thinking is **emotionalism**. The person guided by emotionalism believes and does according to how they feel – not based on truth, not based on Scripture, but based on feelings. If I *want* to act this way, I will do it, as long as it doesn't seem to harm anyone else. If I *feel* that this is true, I will believe it, even if it is not true. *My emotions, my feelings, my desires* dictate how I think and act. If I *want* to spend my money foolishly because I *feel* depressed, I will do it. If I *want* to speak unkindly to a person simply because I *feel* tired and I feel crabby, then I will do it. If I *feel* angry at my husband, then I will not submit to him. If my heart is all a flutter about this beautiful girl, then I will marry her. Oh, have pity on the man or woman whose primary guide in life is their changeable and unstable emotions. They are a slave to their emotions.

And so, every young person must be conscious of the authority of Scripture over their life.

A young person must have an expanding knowledge of the Bible

Now fifthly, we say that a young person must have an expanding knowledge of the Bible. That is, a young person and an older person must be *growing* in their familiarity and knowledge of the Bible. It's said that there was once an atheist who trained his young son to challenge Christians. The son, perhaps in school, perhaps in the neighborhood, would ask a professing Christian, "Do you believe the Bible is true?" And of course, the Christian child or adult would respond, "Yes, I believe the Bible is true." Then the atheist child would ask, "Have you ever *read* the entire Bible?" And if the person responded, "No, I have not read the entire Bible," the atheist child would ask, "Then how do you know that you believe it?"

We're commanded to "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." This is accomplished in part as we grow more familiar with the

Bible. As each year passes, you should know more about the Bible. “Study to show yourself approved,” says 2 Timothy 2, “as a workman who needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Learn the New Testament. Be familiar with the content of each book. Know the doctrines of the Bible. Know the historical accounts, the stories, in the Bible. Be increasingly familiar with the Proverbs, with the Psalms.

You can spend lots of time reading about the news, about your hobbies, about sports, and all of the things the world has to offer. But your reading in the Bible, your study of the Scriptures will profit you a hundred-fold more than all of these things. Seek to have an expanding knowledge of the Bible.

A young person must know the fundamental doctrines of the Bible

Sixthly, I say that a young person must know the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. These are the things that you must believe. You young people, when you leave home, will you be able to explain in your own words the basic doctrines of the Bible? If you cannot, you will be very susceptible to the first friendly, earnest, and persuasive Bible teacher that you run across, and you will find yourself very easily swayed from the beliefs that we hold in this fellowship.

I would say that at a minimum, a young person must be able to define and explain what we mean when we talk about, the Trinity. A young person must be able to define and explain what we mean when we talk about the incarnation, ... election, regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, salvation, sanctification, glorification, Calvinism, and the doctrine of Scripture. A young person should be able to list the sacraments, and explain in their own words the meaning of the sacraments. Why do we baptize infants of believers? What is the purpose of the Lord’s supper? A young person should be able to list the means of grace and explain what they are important.

The ability to articulate the reason we are Christian, protestant, reformed, and Presbyterian, as opposed to secular, humanistic, materialist, Catholic, New Age, Eastern, or generally evangelical is something that many young people do not have when they leave their homes. These are essential things to

believe. Make sure you know them. Along those lines, I heartily commend the Westminster Standards – the confession and the catechisms – as an invaluable resource.

What a great tragedy, what a great loss it would be, to be born in a reformed and Presbyterian church and to not have its rich doctrines be in your possession when you leave home!

A young person must know the greatest commandments

Now seventh, a young person must know the greatest commandments. In the sixth point we talked about things to *believe* – a young person must now know the basic doctrines of Scripture. In this point we talk about things to *do* – the commandments of Scripture. A young person must know the greatest commandments.

Let me ask you here, as you sit here listening, can you tell me, What are the two most important commands in the Bible? In all of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament, the two most important commands are these: To love God, and to love each other. These commands should loom large in our thinking, day by day, as we live, as we work, as we play, as we interact with each other: loving God, and loving others.

But let me also suggest that there are four more commandments that are not only neglected, but are scarcely acknowledged. These are the first four commandments of the Ten Commandments. The first commandment, “Thou shalt have not other gods before Me,” teaches that we should not have any other God but God. But how often are *you* aware of idols, false gods, in your life? Is it because you don’t have them? Or is it because you and I don’t take this commandment as seriously as we should? Could it be that money, pleasures, and self are idols in our lives?

The second commandment, “Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image,” teaches that we may only worship God in the way He has commanded. Have you ever wondered why in our church, we have a relatively simple order of worship? It’s not because our personal preference is for simplicity. It’s because your elders take seriously God’s command that we not introduce anything into the public worship of God unless He has

commanded it. But you will see many churches whose worship service is filled with “good ideas.” Wouldn’t it be a good idea to have a time of fellowship in the middle of the service? Wouldn’t it be a help to worship if we had a special music performance? Wouldn’t it be more meaningful and special if we had a testimony time in worship? But we see in this neglected and unacknowledged command that God puts a high priority on His worship. It’s commandment #2! He is only to be worshipped in ways that He has commanded.

The third commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” teaches that we are to reverently think of God and handle His revelation with honor and reverence. Whenever you think about the Lord, whenever you speak of His, it should be with reverence and honor. It should give you pause. Whenever you read from the Bible or hear the Bible read, you should still yourself as if God in His glory had walked into the room and was speaking the words you are hearing. It should arrest you. Yet in our world, and even in many churches, people are flip about Jesus. They may not curse using the name of Christ, but they are casual, even joking, using the person of Jesus, the names of God, and the teachings of the Bible. May you never find that you are casual about God and His Word.

The fourth commandment, “honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy,” is a commandment whose observance is *dead* in our country. Even in the church, there is little to no recognition of this commandment, even in this denomination. Sunday is not *our* day. Sunday is the *Lord’s Day*. We’re on His clock. It is the market day of the soul, in which we devote ourselves to the worship and things of the Lord.

And so I say, young people, you must know the greatest commandments and strive with all your might to keep them.

A young person must know how to live in family and personal relationships

Now eighth, a young person must know how to live in family and personal relationships.

1 John 4:20-21 ²⁰ If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he

has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

Christianity is not merely a set of propositions. Christianity is about relationships – our relationship with God and our relationship with each other. True Christianity is evidenced in your interactions with your family, with the people you live around, the people you work around. So much of the New Testament dwells on this. Listen even to the fruits of the Spirit, listen to how much this speaks to how we are to treat each other:

Galatians 5:22-26 ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those *who are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Take any of those fruits ask, How does *love* apply to my relationship with my mother? How does *goodness* apply to my relationship with my spouse? Gentleness – how does it apply to your co-worker who often messes up the project? Self-control – how does it apply to how you treat the neighbor who always lets his dog run loose?

The Bible speaks of bearing with one another – forbearance. The Bible speaks about not seeking your own, about not being provoked. How is *forgiveness* and *repentance* worked out in the home? How is *unselfishness* worked out in the workplace where it is cut-throat and competitive? How is *encouragement* worked out with your always sad roommate?

And so a young person must know what the Bible says about how to live in his or her personal relationships.

A young person must know how to select a church and how to serve in it

Now we come to the ninth point. A young person must know how to select a church and how to serve in it. And in this, let me address three things: the

priority that a church selection must have, the criteria to use in selecting a church, and the service to be rendered in a church.

First, then, the priority that a church selection must have. In this day and age, when a young person leaves home for college, or leaves home for a job, the first questions are often, “How good is the school?” or “How much does the job pay? Does the job have good benefits?” But I say to you, that the first question that should cross your mind is this: “Is there a good church there?” If there is no good church, that should almost always be a deal-breaker in choosing a given school or job. It may be the case that the Lord is calling you to plant a new church, or it may be the case that the Lord is calling you to invest yourself in a weak or error-ridden church, but unless He is specifically calling you to do that, don’t follow the paycheck. Don’t follow the prestige. There must be a good church there, . . . otherwise you must have a good reason for essentially leaving a faithful church for an unfaithful church.

Secondly, let’s look at the criteria to use when selecting a good church. One of the first things you should look at is the corporate worship. The primary reason we gather corporately as Christians is not for evangelism, not for Bible study, not for fellowship. The primary reason we gather corporately is for *worship* of the living and true God. It is the purpose for which we were made. It is what we will spend eternity doing – worshipping God. Is the worship faithful to the second commandment? But not only that, you must ask, is the doctrinal position and practice of the church reformed? And not only that, but you must also ask, is heart-religion thriving in this church? A church that has the form, but not the power of godliness is to be shunned. Isaiah 29 says

...these people draw near with their mouths
And honor Me with their lips,
But have removed their hearts far from Me,
And their fear toward Me
is taught by the commandment of men...

You seek a church that worships in spirit and in truth.

Having looked at the priority a church should have, the criteria for selecting the church, we thirdly say that a young person should know how to serve in a church. 1 Corinthians teaches us that we all have different gifts and we all have need of each others’ gifts. Use the gifts the Lord has given you in the Church. Seek to love and serve one another. Seek to reach the lost. Seek to encourage and even rebuke one another, as needed. Seek to submit to your elders in the Lord. Apply yourself to corporate prayer, to hospitality, to worship.

A young person must know how to live conscious of the return of Christ and the final judgment

Now, having said all of this, we come to the tenth point. IT is appropriate that it is the last point, though it is not the least important point. The tenth thing is this: A young person must know how to live conscious of the return of Christ and the final judgment. The Confession of Faith summarizes the teaching of Scripture in chapter 33. Let me read it to you.

WCF 33

God hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ,(1)
to whom all power and judgement is given of the Father.(2)
In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged,(3)
but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ,
to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds;
and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.(4)

The end [purpose] of God's appointing this day
is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy,
in the eternal salvation of the elect;
and of His justice,

in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient.

For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life,
and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing,
which shall come from the presence of the Lord;
but the wicked who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,
and from the glory of His power.(1)

As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded

that there shall be a day of judgment,
both to deter all men from sin;
and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity:(1)
so will He have that day
unknown to men,
that they may shake off all carnal security,
and be prepared to say,
Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.(2)

There is coming a day when all that we see around us – the material, the physical – it will all be destroyed. Even this newly renovated building. And on that day, many will be ushered into glory, and many will be sent to eternal damnation. This is something real on which to fix your sights. As you live your life, young person, as you live out your years and become an *older* person, this day of Christ's return is that many years closer.

Young people, and older people, live your life conscious of the return of Christ and the awesome day of judgment.

In closing, let me read

Psalm 98:7-9

⁷ Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

⁸ Let the floods clap *their* hands:

let the hills be joyful together ⁹ Before the LORD;

for he cometh to judge the earth:

with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.