
Maintaining a Genuine Relationship with God During Adolescence

It is said that our teenage years are the best years of our lives. As teenagers, we enjoy for the first time many new and exciting responsibilities and are placed in a unique position to start taking control of our own lives. As is only natural, we take risks, push the boundaries a little, and begin to forge a strong sense of identity.

The Bible speaks on several occasions about adolescence, perhaps the two most notable examples being Ecclesiastes 12:1:

“Remember your creator in the days of your youth” (NIV)

And 1 Timothy 4:12

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” (NIV)

These verses are significant for us as young and developing adults. The author of Ecclesiastes offers a grim description of the human condition, and that, inevitably, we will lose the energy of youth, becoming like a “wheel broken at the well,” or a “pitcher ... shattered at the spring.” He encourages us to act now, while we are young, and establish a strong relationship with God. The Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, adds to this, explaining that our actions can set an example for fellow believers, and we ought to conduct our youthful energy into displaying love, faith, and purity in speech and deed. These attributes should stem as a matter of course from a genuine healthy relationship with the LORD.

Obedience

The wonder of such a connection with God cannot be overstated. As Jesus says in John 14:23, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (NIV) How wonderful a promise! If we truly love Jesus, and his Father the Lord God, we will obey His teachings, and both God and Jesus will live within us! It is no wonder both Solomon and Paul stress the importance of remembering God and keeping his commandments, especially in our youth.

But, as I understand too well, and I’m sure many of you may understand also, achieving this idealised state of righteous devotion is challenging, especially for us as adolescents. Faith is often likened to a rollercoaster, with many ups-and-downs, but in my experience, there is usually one extreme high, like a camp or youth conference, and then a prolonged trough. We sink back into daily life, and pick up the same routines. We go to school, or attend lectures, work our jobs, continue our traineeship, go to the meeting on Sunday, and then repeat the whole process. Our relationship with God becomes stagnant, and our once positive example of purity and love is dulled. We no longer remember the Creator as we should, but fulfill turgid routines.

Accepting the opportunity – using our talents

So, what are we to do? We are told several times by Scripture that our youthfulness grants us a special opportunity to connect with God, and from this strong relationship reflect His divine attributes of love and purity. But we too easily slip into the same old practices of everyday life, and this incredible relationship deteriorates.

We mentioned earlier that adolescents naturally exhibit 'risk-taking behaviour,' seek to re-define themselves by developing new interests and passions, and begin to forge individual identities. I believe a powerful method of maintaining our relationships with God is to combine 'worship,' with our newfound passions. For example, at my old high school, there was a phase where many young guys learnt the guitar. How beneficial would it be for us to combine this new hobby with 'traditional worship,' and so strengthen our relationship with God in our adolescent years. By all means, still learn love songs on the guitar, but maybe also learn worship and praise music you find impactful.

King David – an example

Consider King David. Scripture tells us he was an avid musician and would play his harp to soothe the mentally afflicted King Saul, as is recorded in 1 Samuel 16:14-23. We also see, from the Psalms, that David, even when he was still a young adult, utilised his musical talents to create songs of worship.

Alternatively, for more physically inclined individuals, who may enjoy exploring and hiking, bushwalking, and adventuring, taking physical risks, consider combining these moments surrounded by nature with Godly worship. While hiking, reflect on God's creation, or perhaps use these serene moments to offer a prayer. This allows us to remember God while also enjoying our own personal passions.

Perhaps, if you're a fisherman, the next time you rig up and cast, remember how Peter, and many of the other disciples, were once fisherman, who became fishers of men. Reflect on the many miracles Christ performed, where Peter's net was so full of fish that he could not even haul it into the boat, as we read in John 21:6:

“He [Jesus] said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they [the Disciples] did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.” (NIV)

Or even, if you're looking for a show to binge, consider watching 'The Chosen,' a popular, crowd-funded programme following the events of Jesus' life and ministry.

Getting closer to God

Now, you may think these suggestions seem silly, or trivial, but I do implore you to at least try it. I know from own life, some of my most profound experiences, times when I have felt closest to God, have been when I'm surrounded by His Creation, or when making music, alone, or together with fellow believers.

Consider ways in which you could better incorporate God into your passions. This will not only allow you to remember God more frequently but will also encourage you to remember God during times of joy, when making music, or exploring nature, when fishing, or even watching TV, just to suggest a few examples.

Adolescence – the best time ...

Ultimately, adolescence is the best time to form a genuine and deep connection with God, as we are encouraged to do so by Solomon in Ecclesiastes. It is also the ideal time for us to act as

beacons, displaying love to those around us, as Paul writes to Timothy. But it is also a period of monotonous routines and repeating obligations, such as school or work. I suggest however, that we can maintain our relationship with God by incorporating Him into our passions and hobbies, finding new ways to remember God in our lives. Try welcoming God into new aspects of your life, and you might be surprised how strong your relationship with Him truly becomes.

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