

"HOW TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE MORAL
IN THE AGE OF THE NEW MORALITY"

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"How To Keep Our Young People Moral In The Age Of The New Morailty"

Immorality is on the rampage. The unfortunate truth of that statement is evidenced by some alarming reports: in 1974 there were over 970,000 divorces, and it is estimated that more than a million marriages will end in divorce this year¹; at the time of the 1970 census, 286,000 unmarried couples were living together, and many expect this number to climb even higher by the time of the 1980 census²; 30% of all American women between the ages of 15 and 19 indulge in premarital intercourse³; there is a VD epidemic with well over 2.5 million cases⁴; pornography is a multi-million dollar a year business⁵; there is one forcible rape every ten minutes⁶; a conservative estimate of people who are exclusively homosexual today is 5 million, and they have formed over 800 gay groups to demonstrate for legalization and acceptance of their perversion⁷. Mention can also be made of widespread prostitution, pimping, mate swapping, key clubs, and numerous indulgers in extra-marital affairs.

Immorality is indeed a reality, and it is something with which we have to contend. We cannot just shrug it off as if it were going on somewhere else. The above reports deal only with the United States and do not include foreign countries. Furthermore, they were taken from nation-wide surveys, not just certain localities, nor were they restricted mainly to large cities. Immorality is found throughout our country, including our towns and communities right here. Unfortunately, at times we also find outbreaks of open immorality among the people of our churches.

One of the primary reasons for this outbreak of immorality is the permissive attitude that has infected our times. Many people today would not look upon most of this immorality as either alarming or disgusting. In fact they do not even call it immorality. Instead they have given it the label "The New Morality."

Although this so-called "new morality" affects people in any age group, it has taken an especially high toll on the youth in our country. Notice in the above quote that it is 30% of all American women between the ages of 15 and 19 who experience premarital intercourse. Those who made this research state: "Among teenagers today, premarital sex is a relatively common event. Three-fourths of all first pregnancies of American teenagers are conceived before marriage. To marry and then conceive is the exception among teenagers."⁸ Those who published the findings on VD said: "VD is a disease of the young; about one in every four cases is under twenty."⁹ Scripture also

indicates that immorality is a special problem for youth when it urges:
"Flee also youthful lusts." (Second Timothy 2:22)

In our churches we have many young people. They are growing up in this age and world of immorality. Constantly they are surrounded with temptations which endanger their morality and soul. Constantly they come into contact with those who promote the "new morality." Youth needs our attention. Of a special concern to us is "How To Keep Our Young People Moral In The Age Of The New Morality."

As Solomon once wrote: "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9), so it is true of the "new morality." As indicated before, about the best definition that can be given to the "new morality" is that it is just plain immorality. It is not "new" at all. However, the present attitude toward sex and the title itself have risen in opposition to what is now termed the "old morality." It wasn't too many years ago that sex was a rather hushed subject. Anything coming to the attention of the public that contained sexual overtones was met with blushes and raised eyebrows. Now this is all outdated. Sex is out in the open. The attitude of the "new morality" is: Sex is beautiful, and if you enjoy it, go ahead and do it," or "Do what comes naturally and what is fun."

The results of this "anything goes" attitude have put into the hands of the devil and the old Adam a tremendous amount of ammunition with which to lead people, and especially our youth, astray. Anyone of our young people can walk into a bookstore and purchase off the rack a book filled with descriptive scenes of obscene and immoral sex. Movies, a major form of entertainment for our youth, present an easy mode of temptation for the devil. Even the present method of rating movies does not safeguard our youth. About the only movies fit for the Christian to view are those rated "G" which consist mostly of animated cartoons or animal shows, hardly ones which gain the interest of young people. Perhaps the age restriction placed on "R" and "X" movies help prevent young people from viewing them. Yet how many theater owners showing such films are like tavern owners who are interested in the profit and are not so concerned about the age of those whom they allow in? The "PG" films, the ones young people most often attend, are not much better. An owner of a number of "adult only" theaters was lamenting a slump in business and explained "The plain fact is that legit films are showing things to children these days that we used to get arrested for." ¹⁰ And when you come right down to it, those film that leave something to the imagination are more dangerous than those that go into

every sickening and boring detail.

The impending evil that lurks in the widespread availability of pornography is obvious enough and can be avoided. But there are also temptations to immorality which are almost impossible to avoid. The suggestive advertising slogans that are displayed on the TV screen and billboards, along with the daring dress code of today, bring temptations with which a young Christian cannot help but be confronted unless he locks himself in the closet.

These are open-faced temptations which the lion of evil has at his disposal. There are also more subtle, less obvious ways in which Satan can work his vicious ways. For example, the more honest and freer philosophy of the "new morality" has brought sex out into the open and promotes the idea of making people more knowledgeable about sex. As a result many public schools have incorporated sex education into their curriculum. On the surface this may appear to be innocent enough. It may even be welcomed by many young people who want to learn more, and by some parents who see it as an opportunity to "get them off the hook." But such courses provide only biological information without any moral implications. To separate sex from the directives given by the almighty Creator can only add to the problem. About all such courses will probably accomplish is to excite the curiosity of the students enough to tempt them to make it an extracurricular activity also

Another subtle temptation the devil can use to sneak up on a person and bring about moral decline is humanism, the basic philosophy behind public education today. This philosophy, man is number one, man is good, man alone has brought about the many accomplishments in the world, man is responsible to himself, and morality is a matter of personal choice, is drilled into our youth in the public school curriculum. Now combine this with the "new morality," and you end up with "I'm number one; I'm the one who counts; I want to have fun; sex is fun; therefore..." A wide road with no roadblocks opens up for the individual on which he speeds to immorality.

A psychologist indicated yet another temptation for our youth, which is perhaps the most difficult for them to combat. He writes:

We find teenagers groping about in a veritable no man's land between childhood and adult life. He is yearning to escape into a grown-up world. Yet no one will accept him there. He hasn't mastered the new tools and weapons with which he's been equipped. He's still a kid.

Every person has certain basic needs in his life. The interpretation of these needs and efforts to satisfy them may vary as the individual matures. Common among us all, though, is the desire for genuine affection - to love and be loved by another person and groups of persons, to be accepted for what one is, to be considered of worth in the eyes of others. In short, one needs to experience membership in a community of persons. 11

In spite of the fact that our young people are Christians, they are still teenagers and find themselves in this peculiar age of conflict. The need to be liked and accepted by their peers can bring great temptations to go along with the crowd. When confronted with the idea "Come on, everyone else is doing it," or "Don't be a kill joy," it can become very difficult for a person to say "no."

Although this list of temptations with which our young people are confronted is already lengthy, more could be mentioned. These temptations have been listed, however, not to provide excuses for any giving in to sin. No matter who or what tempts us, we are still sinners if we break even the least of God's commandments. Rather they have been mentioned for us as pastors to keep in mind when working with our young people. It would be easy for us to sit back in our offices with a rather unconcerned attitude, and then when something unfortunate happens to raise our hands in holy horror and wonder how Christians could do such a thing. It's true: they are Christians, and they should know better. Nevertheless, no matter how hard our young people try not to be of this world, they are still in this world. They are living and growing up in a rough world filled with immorality. The devil is working overtime on them, and they have an old Adam giving the devil a hand. Our youth needs our attention.

The fact that our young people need our attention also has something to say about the way in which we are to deal with them. Someone has said "Adolescence is a time when children should be put in a barrel and fed through the opening in the barrel." 12 At times we might have similar feelings. Youth can be frustrating to work with. They think they know all they need to know, yet they don't know what they want. They don't want to be told anything, yet they want to be told something. But let us remember these are precious children of our heavenly Father. They are souls redeemed by Christ the Crucified. They are members of the flock which God has placed in our car

Concern for their spiritual welfare as children has been shown in Sunday School and Confirmation Class by instructing them in the Holy Scriptures "which are able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and by instructing them with that same Word of God in the kind of life they are to live. After this formal instruction has been completed, we cannot let them down. Continued concern for their spiritual welfare must be shown. Especially in this age of the "new morality" do they need help to "fight the good fight of faith."

The only way for us to help them is to present them with the Word of God. And it all boils down to a basic preaching of the Law and the Gospel. When our young people see so much open sex, and so many freely indulging in sexual activities without restraint, the conscience can become dulled, the sense of shame lessened, doubts can arise, and the young person might wonder if possibly some of this is all right. Therefore they must be reminded about what God has to say concerning this "new morality" or immorality.

It must be emphasized that when we look to God and search His holy Word for answers and directives concerning sex, we are looking in the right place. God is the almighty Creator, and sex is part of His creation. We are told "male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (Genesis 1:27,28) Since God created two creatures of the opposite sex, He obviously intended that they should enjoy their togetherness, and the power given to man for reproduction was a blessing from God.

The natural urge that makes it normal for a person to seek the association and companionship of a person of the opposite sex is also a creation of God. "The Lord God said: It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." (Genesis 2:18) Eve was created by God specifically for Adam to be his "help meet," an appropriate companion. A man and a woman are designed by God to complement each other mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically.

In the words of the "new morality" we can well say "Sex is beautiful; it is pleasurable and good," because it is part of God's creation. When God looked on everything He made, "Behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31) We are told Adam and Eve "were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Genesis 2:25) The human body was a beautiful masterpiece of God's creation, and

there were no shameful, selfish, or self-conscious thoughts in Adam or Eve. "Sex is beautiful." This is true, however, only when God's design is followed. He has made sex and has also given the directives by which it is to be practiced and enjoyed.

Concerning promiscuous sex God simply and plainly says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." With this commandment God is of course protecting His holy state of marriage. It is only in marriage that God intends sex to be practiced. When God brought Adam and Eve together, He, at the same time, instituted marriage and married the first man and woman. It was in this relationship that "the man and his wife" were naked and not ashamed. God forbids any sexual relationships outside of marriage, they are sinful. This is also clear when we read the words of Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." God will judge, a judgment to condemnation, those that defile marriage and outside of marriage join in practices allowed only in marriage.

No matter what our age of "new morality" would lead us to believe about indulging in sexual activities, God does not allow us to look upon adultery as a small thing. Notice the way in which God told the Israelites to deal with adulterers: "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city, and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife; so shalt thou put away evil from among you" (Deuteronomy 22:22-24) Today God has not given us a command to execute adulterers, nevertheless this gives us an indication how God feels about it and how we should look upon it. It is a horrible offense against God.

Compare our times to the days in Jewish history during the time of Jeremiah when God had this to say: "When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged

on such a nation as this?" (Jeremiah 5:7-9) The people were living in prosperous times. Their stomachs were full of food, and they had time on their hands. What did they do? They became like well fed horses standing on one side of the stall and neighing for the female that stood neighing for the female that stood in heat on the other side of the stall. God in effect asks them how He could possibly withhold His anger under such circumstances. God uses some strong terms in discussing adultery.

The New Testament reveals the same attitude. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: Neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.....shall inherit the kingdom of God." (First Corinthians 6:9,10) "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ... of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21) God very strongly condemns sexual sins.

It must also be pointed out that indulging in sexual sins does not go on without results. "Be sure your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23) God allowed the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to continue in their perversion only so long, and "then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." (Genesis 19:24)

David's adultery "found him out." In spite of all his attempts to cover up, tragic results followed: Uriah was killed; many people were offended; there was a general weakening of the kingdom; enemies of God were given a great occasion to blaspheme Him; and David himself was plagued with torments of guilt. And today many of the same results are in evidence from illicit sex relationships.

Another appropriate story to point out, especially to young people, is that of Amnon and Tamar. Although this is a unique story in that they were half-brother and half-sister, it points out tragic consequences of relationships based on what is termed "love." "We love each other" becomes a great temptation and is often suggested as a good and acceptable reason to indulge in promiscuous activities. Amnon, too, "loved" Tamar and was so vexed with passion toward her that he was beside himself. When he finally forcibly pleased himself with her, "then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred where-

with he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her!" (Second Samuel 13:15) This is often the result of illicit sex relationships based on "love." The boy or girl or both lose all respect for the other, others will have little respect for them, and the individuals themselves lose their own self-respect. There is little "love" left anywhere.

Today mention can also be made of VD. The pain, infection, possible sterilization, even death, is sin finding a person out.

Worst of all, one can be sure that even if a person escapes the consequences of his sins here, in eternity they will find him out in a horrible fashion.

In an age when men have distorted our Lord's design for sex and think nothing of it, it is necessary for us to remind our young people how God feels about such doings. However, if we stop here, all we would manage to accomplish is to scare them. This might keep them moral for a while, but at best they would be doing the right thing for the wrong reason, and it would not last long. Soon the attitude "It's wrong, so what," or "I can be careful not to get into trouble," would take over and lead many astray. We must give them more. We must give them motivation for following God's ways. We must give them the strength with which to fight off temptation. We must give them the Gospel. This is the all-important and only thing which can keep our young people moral in the age of the "new morality."

Notice the approach St. Paul, writing by the inspiration of God, uses when urging the Ephesian Christians to abstain from sexual sins. Since we are dealing with Christians, we would do well to follow the same procedure. He writes: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear childre: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Ephesians 5:1-5) By viewing sexual sins against the background of a holy life in God, St. Paul presents sexual sins in such a way that they should be impossible for a Christian to commit. He brings a strong warning against filthiness, but note especially the way he begins his admoni-

tion: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmilling savour." Here is motivating power. Here is the sweet Gospel. Here is pictured the love of God and the love of Christ.

With one word - children, St. Paul indicates God's love for us. God in heaven is our Father, we are His children. This beautiful relationship exists between us and God only because of Him. We sinners had nothing to do with it. It was out of love for us, that beautiful love described in John 3:16, that God in Christ Jesus made us His children and heirs of everlasting life. And the love of our Savior is identical with that of our Father. It is a supreme love, a love that, without any merit or worthiness on our part, led Him to sacrifice His life on the cross to bring us salvation.

Such a wonderful love has been shown us, and with that same word - children, St. Paul indicates how we are to react to that love. As we so often see children, either purposely or unconsciously, imitating their parents, so we as children of God are to be followers, imitators of Him. Obviously we cannot copy the divine attributes of God, nor can we sacrifice our lives to ransom Christ as He has ransomed us, but we are to imitate their love by "walking in love," in other words, we are to love them. This includes patterning our lives according to God's directives.

The Apostle lays a solid and firm foundation based on the Gospel before he brings his admonition. His admonition is a description of the kind of life that is involved in loving God. And note also how throughout the admonition he keeps reminding us of God's love and what it means to us. At the end of verse 3, after warning against indecent behavior, he says, "let it not once be named among you as becometh saints." In effect St. Paul is saying, "Remember who you are. You are saints, redeemed children of God. A life of immorality is not fitting for such people." After warning them against indecent talk, he says, "(This is) not convenient, but rather giving of thanks." Again he reminds us of God's love for which we owe Him constant thanks, rather than wasting time on indecent talk.

As St. Paul, so we, too, above all, must give our young people the Gospel. We must always remind them of the love that has been extended to them. This, and this only, can produce a moral life. We cannot extract a moral life from anyone by pounding them with the Law. The Law kindles no love, only the Gospel does. Realization of

God's love must come before "this is the love of God that we keep His commandments," (First John 5:3) has any meaning in their lives. Only the Gospel can make our young people willing and able to lead a godly and moral life. As it is written: "(God) also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (Second Corinthians 3:6)

Again, however, we cannot stop here. Now we must answer some questions for our young people. They are Christians; they know their Savior Jesus Christ; they have felt the wonderful joy of the Gospel; but what kind of moral life are they to lead in a response to this wonderful love? Obviously they know that God forbids "going all the way" with anyone outside of marriage. There are, however, also a lot of "in betweens". Just what does God expect of us? How far can we go on a date? What about petting? What about reading dirty books or seeing such movies? These are but a few of their questions.

Again we must go to the Word of God, and when we do so, we are in the right place, for the Word of God is "profitable for...instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (Second Timothy 3:16,17)

The positive part of "thou shalt not commit adultery" is that "we lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed." This means avoiding all unchastity. It starts by avoiding adultery of the heart. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries..." (Matthew 15:19) An outward sin of adultery need not be committed before a sin of adultery is committed in the eyes of God. Jesus said: "Who-soever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) These two passages answer all questions concerning a person's moral conduct. Indulging in any activities such as petting, reading filthy books, the telling of or listening to indecent jokes, which are going to incite lust, are sinful. The Christian must remember that we are "buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) The Christian is to "walk in newness of life," and this involves daily drowning the old Adam with its sins and evil lust. The Christian must avoid anything that will arouse rather than drown the old man.

It is a big order that God has given the Christian to fulfill in leading a chaste and decent life. Thankful we can be that He has also given us some directions to follow for accomplishing this. One such direction comes in the words of Jesus: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41) It is in the times of severe trial and temptation, such as our young people face every day in this age of immorality, that the weakness of the sinful flesh is ready to give in. It is also in such times that prayerful watchfulness, together with full confidence in God's power and promise to help, will maintain the strength of the spirit to follow in God's ways. One thing for which we must pray is that for which David prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

God has also advised: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." (Proverbs 1:10) Here are words of wisdom for our young people to follow when dealing with their friends. Since our young people are in the world, they cannot avoid coming into contact with ungodly people. Due to continued contact some of their friends may be such people. But when they come with enticing suggestions to go immoral ways, friendship or no friendship, an outright refusal is called for. Especially because of a young person's compelling need to be accepted by his peers, he must always be reminded of the distinction that lies between a child of God and a child of the world.

Along the same lines God says: "Flee also youthful lusts." (Second Timothy 2:22) Notice God says "run". Don't just walk. The best way to avoid adultery of any kind is to stay away from anything that will lead to adultery. Both the action and attitude of Joseph are good ones to copy.

In addition to this it is also the responsibility of each individual Christian to avoid doing anything that will lead others in the way of sin. One must avoid any action or appearance that will incite lust in others. God tells women: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." First Timothy 2:9,10) God certainly does not want His children to be tempters leading others away from Him. And if a person refrains from giving any indication of willingness to walk immoral

ways, he is less apt to be approached by someone with evil intentions. In this connection, consideration should also be given to the kind of person one seeks for dates and to be a lifelong mate.

Such directions God has given for the Christian to keep him moral in the age of the "new morality". It is only by following them that this can be accomplished. And it is only God who can lead Christians to follow these directions. This He does through His Word. He reveals the attitude that must be taken toward immorality, and He also reveals His wonderful love which alone can move the Christian in a life of love. It becomes our responsibility as ministers of God's Word to see to it that our young people receive God's Word.

If we could get our young people seriously to ask themselves, whenever they are faced with a questionable situation, "What would Jesus have me do?" a great deal would be accomplished. This question does two things for them. First of all, it reminds them of their Savior and what He, in love, has done for them. It makes them remember who they are. Secondly, it gets them looking in the right direction for answers and guidelines they should follow.

Before they are going to do this, however, religion must mean something to them. It must be something they carry with them each day. If religion means nothing more than getting up on Sunday morning, putting on something a little better than faded jeans, and sitting in a pew for an hour, they won't get far. We must get them to realize that the Word of God has something important to say to them today. This calls for remembering them in our sermons, and it calls for a well-rounded youth program in the church.

The ground work for a successful youth program must be laid in Confirmation Class. A number of misconceptions must be dispelled. The "religion is for kids" attitude and "confirmation is the end of the line" thinking must be done away with. A multitude of opportunities present themselves during Confirmation instruction to impress upon the children the urgent need for constant contact with the Word of God and growth in spiritual knowledge and maturity. We must also strongly emphasize to our children just what they are promising on Confirmation Day when they stand before God's altar and answer "I do so intend, by the grace of God" to the question: "Finally, do you intend faithfully to conform all your life to the rule of the divine Word, to be diligent in the use of the means of grace, to walk as it becometh the Gospel of

Christ, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to the Triune God, even unto death?" (The Pastor's Companion, p. 24) We don't want to make liars out of them.

And not only the children must be reminded of the importance of continued instruction in God's Word, but the parents also. Most of the negative attitudes are gained in the home. It is absurd to see people look upon teenagers as immature human beings, but as soon as they have been confirmed to consider them mature Christians. Yet so often they do. We have to have meetings with the parents to make arrangements for Confirmation Day. Here is an excellent opportunity to impress upon them the urgent need of keeping their children in close contact with God's Word.

It is not, however, all negative. There are also some positive factors in our favor. The pastor has had opportunity for very close contact with his young people recently in Confirmation Class, and this should be maintained. The enthusiasm of the newly confirmed is usually high and should be used.

The first step in a youth program is to get them in church on Sundays. It is here that they are told of their great need for the Gospel, and here that they receive that precious Gospel which alone can bring joy and salvation to them and at the same time move them to follow in the steps of Jesus. And if they aren't coming, we should attempt to get them there. An excellent point made by the Evangelism Committee at our last conference was that it was only forty days after God spoke to the Children of Israel from the mount that they were bowing before the golden calf. We can not afford to allow our young people to bleed to death spiritually for four or five years before we do something about it.

The Sunday sermon, however, can not contain all that one would like to include in a discussion concerning moral life. Nor does it afford an opportunity for the young people to express themselves. Such opportunities to supplement the religious training of the Sunday sermon are afforded in Junior Bible Class, or, more commonly, the Young People's Society.

As in all church societies the most important objective is growth in Christian knowledge and maturity. Bible study is therefore essential. Probably the best is a topical approach to pertinent and interesting subjects with discussion. In Confirmation Class head knowledge is stressed, and application often gets the short end. In Youth Bible Class there is an excellent opportunity to build on

this knowledge and make it especially applicable to their lives. Even if we manage to get across good application in Confirmation Class, the change just from eighth grade to high school puts our young people in such an entirely different atmosphere that much new application is called for. A little care should be taken in choosing the topics. A restudy of portions of the Catechism with special emphasis on application to the life of a teenager, although very profitable, will most likely not excite a person who has just sat through two or three years of intensive study of the Catechism. A topic such as "God's Design For Sex" (Prof. Gerlach's: The Word Is Now) will appear to be much more appealing, interesting, and applicable than the topic: "What Meaning The Sixth Commandment Has For Our Lives," although the same points in either presentation would be essentially the same. Another good source for topics is the young people themselves. They may give you difficult ones or even put you on the spot, but at least you know what concerns them, and you can make the Bible say something to them in their everyday life.

How often should such youth meetings be held when a religious discussion is the main purpose? I would venture a guess that the average in our congregations is once a month. This is perhaps about all that our schedule will allow for on both the part of the pastor and of the young people. More would be ideal, so why not make use of our Adult Bible Classes? During the winter months when I had Adult Bible Class, several of our young people also came. After the shock wore off, I was overjoyed. It never occurred to me that any of them would attend. I guess I figured they had their Young People's Society, and this was for adults. Certainly this does not have to be the case. We can make our Bible Classes open to them and invite and encourage them to attend. Maybe we should change the name to something like Bible Class For Communicant Members.

A second purpose of the Young People's Society is to provide Christian fellowship, but it need not be done by social activities. Fellowship takes care of itself by just gathering for Church, Bible Class, or performing some service in the church with others. This does not mean that there is no room for social activities in our youth program. They do serve an important purpose. They do provide Christian fellowship, and they also show the young people that they can have fun without following the ways of the world. But we must be careful that our youth program doesn't become only social functioning. We

can not compete with all the secular activities in which our young people get involved. Nor are we going to get them involved in church and make religion important to them if all we do is involve them in social activities and take up their time.

Second in line in our youth program is involving them in services in the church. And we must make these services important for them. If we approach our youth as a last resort to do something no one else will do, or with the idea that here is something they can't botch up, we will turn them off. Our young people have a lot of energy. They want to be of service. Use them. There are a multitude of services they can perform: teachers or assistants for Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Pioneers, canvassing, and Evangelism; helping with sick and shut-in calls; ushering; choir; delinquency calls among peers; making banners and other displays for Mission Festival, Christmas, Easter, etc. Certainly we are not going to get all our young people or ever one of them involved in all of this, and if we do, we should probably pay him a salary, too. The point is: there are enough opportunities for service in the church to get all of our young people involved.

Some of these services can involve a large group, while others will involve perhaps only one. This brings out another point. Every time we have an opportunity for service in the church that a young person can perform, we do not necessarily have to go to those who are already active. Some of our young people do not attend or join the Young People's Society because it may be impossible for them to do so. Others may be too shy and sensitive and feel uncomfortable in an informal gathering of their peers, and there are those who just don't want to bother. This is no reason to exclude them from at least giving them an opportunity to perform some service for their Lord. Approach them something like this: "Say, Sam, our youth group is making a display for Mission Festival, and we need a stand. Do you suppose you could help us out?" Perhaps in such a way their interest will be increased, and they will take part.

What is the main purpose to be served in involving our young people in important services in the church? Certainly not just to get something done or to get some work out of them. Rather it gives them an opportunity to put into action love for God. Such services help to remind them of the marvelous love God has shown them. Constant reminders of the love of God in church, Bible Class, and through services in the church hopefully will carry over into their

everydaylives now, when they are off at college, when they establish their own home, and they will always be ready seriously to consider: "What would Jesus have me to do?"

As Solomon said, "There is no new thing under the sun," so it is true of this paper. All that has been said is obvious enough. We know that we must preach sin, grace, and sanctification to our young people. We know we must make religion important to them so that they have the desire to follow God's ways, especially in living a chaste and decent life in this age of the "new morality." Yet, in spite of all our attempts, there will still be some outbreaks of immorality among our young people. This is a battle against sin and Satan, and we will never be 100% successful. We must try, however, to be as successful as possible. This calls for one thing above all: "Preach the Gospel." Remember that Gospel is "the power of God," (Romans 1:16) and He has given His promise: "My Word shall not return unto Me void." (Isaiah 55:11) Turst in Him.

(Pastor John Stellick
Redwood Falls Conference
October 7, 1975)

FOOTNOTES

- ¹U. S. News and World Report. "Throwaway Marriages - Threat to the American Family." January 13, 1975. Page 43.
- ²Redbook. "The Marriage Boom: A Nationwide Report." February, 1975.
- ³Science News. "Teenage Illegitimate Births High." July 6, 1974.
- ⁴Science Digest. "VD - Hush Epidemic on a New Rampage." June, 1973.
- ⁵Newsweek. "Sexploitation - Sin's Wages." February 12, 1975. Page 78.
- ⁶McCall's. "The Polite Victim." January, 1975. Page 27.
- ⁷Newsweek. "Homosexuality." November 4, 1974. Page 32.
- ⁸Op. cit. "Teenage Illegitimate Births High." Page 6.
- ⁹Op. cit. "VD - Hush Epidemic on a New Rampage." Page 29.
- ¹⁰Newsweek. "The Porn Slump." November 4, 1974. Page 84.
- ¹¹Francis I. Frellick. Helping Youth in Conflict. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1971. Pages 39 and 76.
- ¹²Robert A. Blee. Counseling With Teenagers. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1965. Page 19.