

Characteristics of Teenagers

LECTURE 3

Teenagers awaken to their physical bodies, become aware of new-found strengths and energies, and want to test these against whatever opposition comes along. They're no longer ignorant like children

Session Topics:

1. **Adolescence** 159
That awkward stage between child and adulthood. A Time of inflated opinion, knowing all, self-exaltation and untested theories.
2. **Rebelliousness** 161
Including behaviours that are anti-social, cliquey, abusive and irrational.
3. **And also positive behaviour** 162
Including resourcefulness, creativity and energy. Teenagers need direction but members of this group typically make things happen.

Outcomes:

After completing this session you should be able to -

Recognise the huge potential inherent in teenage – typical Christians, and begin to direct their energy into Kingdom Productivity.

Objectives:

- **Identify persons with potential**
Motivating them to action.
- **Provide direction for growth**
Recognising the reality of adolescence. Dealing with rebelliousness. Teaching God's principles.
- **Develop positive behaviour**
Focusing on resourcefulness, creativity and energy.

1 John 2:13,14 *I write to you, young men, because you have over- come the evil one ... because you are strong, and the Word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

What a wonderful time of growth this is. Teenagers suddenly awaken to their **physical bodies**. They become aware of the physical strengths and energies within themselves when they **try out their newfound strengths** against whatever opposition that comes.

This is the truth – they are no longer children, but they want the whole world to know it. They are no longer ignorant like children are – they know a thing or two. In fact, today's teenagers think they know more than many adults do.

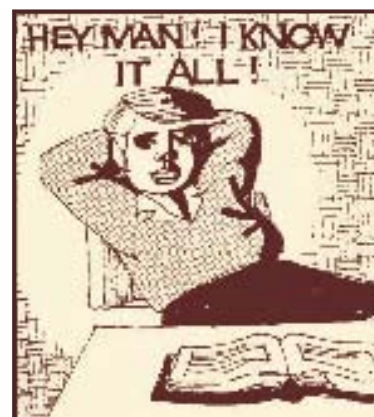
■ Untested Knowledge

Here we have the biggest problem in teenagers. They are crammed full of knowledge which **they have never really put into practise**.

Spiritual teenagers are the same. They have been taught the **Word of God**, they know about their **inheritance in christ**, they know all about the **enemy**, the **weapons of their warfare**, the **armour** etc, etc. But none of it has been tested in a practical way and they want to get started **right away – right now!**

■ The Kingdom Grows

Anything that does not grow and expand in the Kingdom of God is very **strange**. Scientists have proved that **new galaxies** with their own sun, planets, etc. are being formed everyday. The earth has not been depopulated, but is experiencing a **population explosion**.



Matthew 13:31-33 *He told them another parable: The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds. **Yet when it grows**, it is the biggest of garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches. He told them still another parable: The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.*

- ◆ Is a baby perfect?
- ◆ Is a child perfect?
- ◆ Is a teenager perfect?

The moment we remain at any stage we **cease to be perfect** since growth is perfectly normal.

■ Retarded Growth

'RETARD' means to '**slow down the normal process of development**': For the Christian this is a **matter of choice**, We can submit to the processes that produce normal growth or we can choose otherwise,

We do not have to be babies, children or teenagers for longer than normal – **progress steadily, consistently and on time**.

They want to prove to the world that they are no longer children

Teenagers look for opportunities to practise what they know

As long as we are in our natural stages of growth, we are in God's perfect plan

Do not be a retarded Christian

■ Stunted Growth

This is growth that has **stopped** – short of full stature and maturity. **We must never stop growing.** So many Christians babies or children or teenagers stop growing and never progress further,

Do not be
a stunted
Christian

We are now dealing with the **teenager stage of growth** in our **identification parade**, Remember that when you know where you are in your growth you will know how far to progress – **you will have an objective**, This brings a sense of security. It also brings a sense of **honest evaluation** of who you are and what God expects of you,

1. Adolescence

Adolescence is that stage between **childhood** and **adulthood**, that awkward stage of metamorphosis where the **child becomes an adult** and does not seem to fit in anywhere – too big to be a child and too small to be an adult.

1.1 Inflated Opinions

Romans 12:3 *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.*

A baby has no opinions of himself while a child has humble opinions of himself knowing his place in society, having an honest evaluation. A teenager on the other hand has an inflated opinion of himself. They think they know more, can do better and are greater.

This is the
stage of
extremes

- ◆ Mental
- ◆ Emotional
- ◆ Physical

■ Because of Knowledge Gained

1 Corinthians 8:1 *Knowledge puffs up.*

During the childhood stage more knowledge comes to us than we can actually assimilate and use, and that puffs us up. We get to the point where we seem to know so much that we are all-wise and all-knowing.

Practical experience is lacking.



■ A State of Self-deception

James 1:22 *Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourself.*

We must be careful of this **awkward stage between receiving and practising the Word**. This is when we think that we are doers just because **we know some facts** while we are not actually doing these things.

1.2 The Know All Stage

Because of our **inflated opinions** about ourselves, because we think we have all knowledge and all wisdom, we allow nobody to teach us. They can learn from us, after all.

■ Outmoded Practices

Teenagers think that adults must get with it. They are old fashioned and don't know much. And so the doors close for any further instruction and input.

■ Taught by Life

One of the main teachers that gatecrashes on the teenager's Christian life is **hard experience**. Older Christians may become irritated and even exasperated, but take heart – the university of life is a good teacher.

Everybody must learn to stand unaided in life

■ Cutting the Apron Strings

If we always depended on our elders we would never **mature** and **develop**. Therefore this '**unteachable**' stage is **absolutely necessary**. The know it all and independence is a **necessary part** of the growth process.

Relax if you have **properly trained the believer as a baby** because **as a child**, he will get through this independent unteachable stage to adulthood safely. After all, they are being **independent about the teaching you gave them as children**. They are eager to put it into practise without any help! Thank you!

The only time this independence is detrimental is when the proper foundation was not laid in the childhood stage

1.3 Self-exaltation

Teenage Christians are **infuriating** and tend to make the mature – and for that matter anybody – look small in their sight. They tend to make you look ridiculous at times.

■ They Show Off

They will brag and boast about their **achievements**. For every one you have they have ten better – and they will not let you talk about what you did. They prophesy better, preach better, work more and have better converts.



■ They are Highly Competitive

If you have come across a competitive Christian you have met a Christian teenager. They are not in what you are doing for God unless they are **bigger**, **better** or **faster**.

1 Peter 5:5 *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

A competitive spirit is hard on a teenage Christian – **maturity will come** even if it comes the hard way. This attitude is actually **hitting your head against a brick wall**. In the end we learn! This was a saying even in Paul's time:

Acts 9:4 *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*

1.4 Untested Theories

As we have said before ...

They are going through that **transition stage** of going from ...

- ◆ What you have learned, into **doing it**
- ◆ Someone cared for to **someone looking after oneself**

Teenage Christians are full of untested theories

♦ **Being Hardheaded and Foolish to Taking Sound Advice**

They can tell you all about being saved – but hardly get anyone saved,
They can tell you all about the Holy Spirit, deliverance – but never get anyone delivered or filled with the Spirit.

2. Rebelliousness

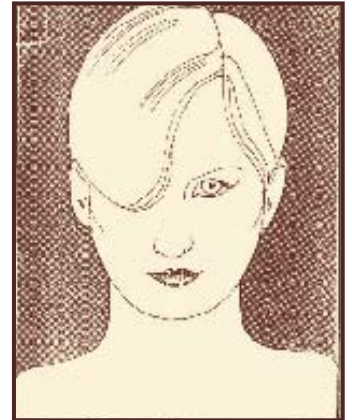
Teenagers in Christ cannot understand why no one **thinks like them** and will gang up on the “**establishment**”.

2.1 They are Antisocial

They have an aversion to **kid’s stuff** – something below their elevated realms, and therefore have no patience for Christian children.

And Spiritual Babies?! They are awkward and insecure around babies. They are too messy and make too much noise. They also demand too much time,

Adults are out of bounds except where it is to their own advantage



2.2 They are Cliques

Teenagers mix with their own crowd establishing their own kingdoms and spreading their own fame amongst themselves.

■ Teenagers are Choosy

They will mix only with those who help them extend their kingdoms – therefore they **show favouritism**.

2.3 They are Abusive

1 Corinthians 9:1-6 *Am I not a apostle? ... do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?*

Here we see Paul, who was the founder of the Corinthian Church, being abused by the Christians there. This is the way teenagers act. They hurt those closest to them, especially their parents – those who brought them to Christ.

2.4 They are Irrational

Many teenagers have a **nobody-loves-me complex**. They want to be loved and accepted but at the same time they want to prove themselves without thinking that they are hurting somebody. When they are disciplined they think that their wonderful actions are not appreciated or accepted.

■ They Throw Tantrums

The whole world will be aware of their dissatisfaction – and how no one loves them or appreciates them.

■ They Sulk

They might withdraw and avoid contact with others.

■ They are Sensitive

Misunderstandings abound. They misread the way you look at them. The way you speak to them and your gestures soon generally cause great dissension and strife.

James 3:14-16 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast or lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist confusion and every evil thing will be there.

3. Resourceful, Creative and Energetic

1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Apart from their **adolescence** and **rebelliousness** teenagers do have great **enthusiasm** and **energy**. If we could understand and enhance this and **harness these attributes** of teenagers we could produce Christians **whose youth is not despised**.

3.1 They Bring New Direction

In his book '**successful home cell groups**' Yonggi Cho advises that young Christians be used as leaders since old ones do not have the **same energy** and **zeal** as the younger ones.

Christians in this stage of growth can really get stuffy **old mature believers out of a rut** and **apathy**. They might make mistakes and hurt people, but if we **accept them as they are, they may even bring new direction**.

Young Christians can get things stirred up

3.2 It Requires Discipline

We can bring out the best in believers in this growing stage with some **wise discipline**. It is possible to get them to be an example to the believers and to **redirect their energy** into ...

- ◆ A love for the Word;
- ◆ Correct conduct and actions;
- ◆ The love walk;
- ◆ Positive strong faith; and
- ◆ A life of purity.

Be satisfied as long as you are growing up and **be determined to move into adulthood**. This is a place where God can use you effectively, and where you do exploits for God. **This is a place where you are to bring souls to the kingdom and bring Christians to maturity.**

Appreciate every stage in the growth process