

Young People, Don't Give Up!

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Youth is an exciting time of life. Most young people are full of optimism at the prospects of the future. Solomon wrote, *“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment”* (Eccl. 11:9).

Today, young people are dealing with a global pandemic. Like everyone else, their plans for the future have been put on hold and or changed. What was hope a few months ago, has turned into anxiety about the future.

Young people are anxious about their education. Will they return to school? Will they be able to advance in their plans for college? How will the pandemic effect graduations? Aside from education, some on the precipice of adulthood are wondering how they will find a job.

The last few months have been a discouraging time for everyone. Even young people have been affected. They too have concerns about the future. In light of this, here are some pieces of advice for young people as they try to cope with the pandemic.

1. Life does not always go according to plan. Parents, grandparents, teachers, and guidance counselors wisely emphasize the need for young people to plan for the future. This is for good reason. However, despite our best preparations, life rarely unfolds according to our plans. No one planned for a global pandemic, but a global pandemic is exactly what has happened!

Solomon wrote, *“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven”* (Eccl. 3:1). There are many different seasons throughout life. Some seasons are anticipated; some are unexpected. Some seasons are pleasant; some are distressing. Regardless of the season, God uses all seasons of life to shape us into better people: *“He has made everything beautiful in its time...”* (Eccl. 3:11).

2. Be adaptable. The world is constantly changing. Yet, most are resistant to change. When our situation in life changes we have to learn to adapt and move forward. Sometimes change is unexpected and undesirable. This certainly is true of our present situation. However, our attitude toward the pandemic is not going to change the pandemic. Rather, we must learn how to adapt our plans for the future to this new reality.

Paul learned to be adaptable. From prison, he wrote, *“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me”* (Phil. 4:11-13). Adaptability is not an easy lesson to learn; however, it is necessary for us to make progress.

3. Talk to older people. Learning about the life experiences of older people is invaluable. Older people can expand your perspective on life. While no one has experienced a pandemic, most have lived through unanticipated hardships. They have faced economic depressions and recessions. They have dealt with the challenges of finding employment. They have dealt with issues of life and death. You can learn from the wisdom of their experiences.

Find a mentor. Samuel had Eli. Timothy had his mother, grandmother, and Paul. Who do you have to wisely guide you through this time in your life? Remember, *“Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand”* (Prov. 19:20-21).

4. Count your blessings. We sometimes sing, *“When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed... When you are discouraged thinking all is lost...Count your many blessings...Name them one by one...And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”*

When our plans for the future are doubtful, we tend to lose perspective. We can become bitter and even paranoid. We forget what we have. Have you been blessed? You have! God has blessed each of us with grace and the ability to be useful (Eph. 4:7). Maybe today would be a good time to name your blessings one by one. Then, use those blessings to cope with the new challenges the pandemic has created.

5. Plan your future around service. Most make plans to make a lot of money. Their plans center on themselves. Paul warned, *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs”* (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Planning our futures around wealth is unwise and dangerous. Wealth is unstable. Coveting money destroys love and casts doubt on faith. People whose lives are centered on money are never satisfied: *“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income...”* (Eccl. 5:10).

Instead, plan your future around service. Being a Christian is about serving God by serving others. This is what Solomon meant when he wrote, *“Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”* (Eccl. 12:1). Begin serving God in youth. A self-giving life is the path to having a fulfilling life. It is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35).

Conclusion

To the young, you have a world of potential. Despite our current situation, you still have bright futures. Life is filled with unexpected setbacks. The question is not if a setback will occur. The question is how you will respond.

While undesirable, setbacks are opportunities. They force us to reimagine the possible and engage us to grow. Character is forged through stress. Paul described this very process when he wrote, *“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”* (Rom. 5:3-5).

I wish young people did not have to confront such a serious situation at this stage in their lives. But, my wish is not the point. Dwelling on what we cannot change is not productive in solving any problem in life. Thankfully, with the help of God and each other, we can get through these challenging times. Young people, don't give up!

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Galatians 6:10