

THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG MEN

Father's Day 2009

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. "And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.

Malachi 4:5-6 NASB

I. Thoughts for Young Men

A. A Change of Direction

1. At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I was led to re-read a little booklet by one of the best Christian writers of the 19th century, Bishop John Charles Ryle, (May 10, 1816 - June 10, 1900).

2. *Thoughts for Young Men* is a small book that Ryle wrote at 71 from a perspective that has now come into my own life.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Charles_Ryle

3. The booklet was birthed out of his loving burden for young men...

I tremble to observe how few young men are led by the Spirit-how few are in the narrow way which leads to life-how few are setting their affections on things above-how few are taking up the cross and following Christ. I say it with all sorrow, but I believe...I am saying nothing more than the truth.

J.C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*, Charles Nolan Press, Moscow

4. This book gripped my heart as I read it because at 65, I find myself carrying the same burden for young men...not just for fathers, but for the FFF, "future fathers" of America. And if I had to sum up the message in one word, it's this:

Theme

Teaching Christ to young men is the only hope for America.

5. Please do not think I minimize the value of our daughters, granddaughters and nieces; No! I only say, with all seriousness, that unless we can breakthrough with the young men of the next generation, all will be lost. If we don't, no matter how godly our young women...

- a. Who will our young women marry? Who will stand as the spiritual head of our Christian families? Who will set the manly example for our grandsons and great grandsons?
- b. Who will lead our corporations and governments?
- c. Who will stand for Christ in our churches?
- d. Who will bear the heat of the battle when the enemy comes in like a flood?

6. How else can we avoid the sins of Adam in Eden, except we train our young men in how to cover their wives, protect their garden and defeat the devil?

B. Lest You Misunderstand.

1. **Ask any faithful minister** of the Gospel: How many young men hotly pursue Christ, take Holy Communion seriously or eagerly attend the House of God? Who are the most backward in availing themselves of the means of grace? Who are the most difficult to draw to prayer meetings? Which group is the most inattentive when you preach on Sunday, the most likely to be distracted to what is preached, looking around, doodling, writing notes? Which group in the church is the hardest to manage? Who causes the pastor the greatest uneasiness and sorrow? Who but the young men?

2. **Ask any parent:** Who in the family gives them the most pain and trouble? Who needs the most watchfulness? Who are the first to be led away from what is right and the last to remember good advice and cautions? Who are the most difficult to keep in order? Who the most likely to break into open sin and bring shame on the family name? Who brings the most disappointment and sadness to the hearts of moms and dads? Who but the young men?

3. **Ask any policeman or magistrate:** Who goes the bars and places of ill repute the most? Who are the greatest Sabbath breakers? Who are the most arrested for drunkenness? Who are most likely to breach the peace, steal, get into fights? Who constitutes the vast majority in prisons and city jails? Who but the young men?

4. So what do we do? Criticize them? Judge them? No! We must turn our hearts toward them. (See Malachi 4:4-6) We must wake up to the tremendous opportunity we have to teach Christ to a generation that can turn the sorry state of this nation around!

5. And we must not delay! We must begin now! The younger the better!

People's hearts are seldom changed when they are not changed young. Seldom indeed are men converted when they are old. Habits have long roots...Habits are like stones rolling downhill-the further they roll, the faster and more ungovernable is their course. Habits, like trees, are strengthened by age. A boy may bend an oak, when it is a sapling-a hundred men cannot root it up when it was a full-grown tree. So with habits...the older the stronger...Every fresh act of sin lessens fear and remorse, hardens our hearts, blunts the edge of our conscience, and increases our evil inclinations."

J. C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*

II. Dangers Young Men Face: Five Fights We Face

A. Pride

1. Pride is the oldest sin in the world. It sits in our hearts by nature.
2. Pride in young men manifests in rude and discourteous behavior to parents and those in authority.
3. Pride causes young men to consider older people stupid, dull and out of touch.
4. Pride causes young men, like young horses, to resist any form of control.
 - So with Rehoboam, son of Solomon, who refused the counsel of the old men and listened to the young men of the court, and Israel was split into two nations, never to recover.
 - So with the prodigal son, who would not submit to live quietly under his father's roof but would go into a far country and be his own master...later to be found in the pig pen, eating the slop
5. On the other hand, humility was the beginning of Solomon's wisdom. (1 Kings 3:7-8) Remember, Jesus was a "learner", even at age 12. (Luke 2:46)
6. As young men, we tend to take pride in our handsomeness, strength or talents!*

***Athletics in America stokes this pride and encourages, rewarding athletically gifted young men with millions of dollars, though they have little character or moral discipline-the results are continually found on the sports pages of America!**

B. Love of Pleasure

1. Young men are particularly prone to the love or pursuit of pleasure. When we're young, death seems far away and having fun seems the most important thing. But the Bible speaks of those who are:

...puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

2 Timothy 3:4

Young men, time would fail me if I were to tell you of all the fruits this love of pleasure produces, and all the ways in which it may do you harm...things that please the senses and gratify the flesh—these are the sorts of things that have mighty power at your time of life...

J.C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*

2. It is young men who become consumed with video games or sports, and the most likely to pursue experimentation with sex.

3. The Bible declares a breach of the 7th commandment, sex outside marriage, is the sin that leaves the worst scars on our souls, the sin that **“takes away the heart.”** (Hosea 4:11)

If you love life, flee fornication.

1 Corinthians 6:18

4. Great Bible men like Lot, Samson and David all gave in to this sin.

I made a covenant with my eyes, not to look with lust at a young woman.

Job 31:1 NLT

C. Thoughtlessness and Inconsideration

1. There is so little real *thinking* that goes in us when we are young men.

2. The proliferation of video games, TV channels, iPods, cell phones and text messaging has made the situation worse so that there's little time for solitude, quietness and reading.

a. Mark Bauerline's new book is called, *The Dumbest Generation: How The Digital Age Stupifies Young Americans And Jeopardizes Our Future, (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30)*

http://www.amazon.com/Dumbest-Generation-Stupefies-Americans-Jeopardizes/dp/1585427128/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1245415520&sr=1-1

...reports from government agencies, foundations, survey results, scholarly institutions, most young Americans do not read literature, or fully know how to work, (ask any employer), visit cultural institutions of any sort, or vote (most don't even understand a simple ballot). They cannot explain basic scientific methods, recount fundamental facts of American history, or name any of their local political representatives. What they DO excel at is—each other. They spend unbelievable amounts of time electronically exchanging

stories, pictures, tunes and texts, savoring the thrill of peer attention and dwelling in a world of childish banter and coarse images. Anyone who thinks this is just...the time worn tradition of an older generation wagging its finger at a young one, better think again...

From the Back Cover of *The Dumbest Generation*, by Mark Bauerline

(As a pastor, I might add reading the Bible to the list)

3. This one is not just for the boys.

*Last month I attended my granddaughter's choir recital in the school auditorium sitting next to a young lady about 12. She had 2 cell phones and was continually texting back and forth on both. She hardly looked up during the entire 40 minute program. Can this be normal?

D. Contempt of Religion

1. No group is generally more contemptuous or inattentive of religion than young men.

2. In 2 Kings 2, we read the account of the young people of Bethel mocking Elisha—and of this spirit, all young men should beware.

- “I don't understand the Bible...” You don't understand medicines, either, but you take them when they can save your life or take away your pain.
- “Church is boring...” If you don't know Christ, everything will ultimately bore you because you have a God-shaped hole in your soul only God can fill.
- “My parents don't live as Christians away from the church and church people are hypocrites...” You won't go to hell based on what your parents do or don't do. What's keeping you back from being the real deal?

E. The Fear of Man's Opinion

1. Ryle saved the best for last—this is, in my opinion, the #1 obstacle to so many young men...fearing what others think of them.

The fear of man brings a snare.

Proverbs 29:25

It is terrible to observe the power which (fear of man) has over...the minds of the young. Few seem to have any opinions of their own, or to think for themselves. Like dead fish, they go with the stream and tide: what others think right, they think right; and what others call wrong, they call wrong too. There are not many original thinkers in the world. Most...are like sheep, they follow a leader.

J.C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*

2. The fear of man brought down many a good man in the Bible!

“I feared the people”, King Saul told Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:24, and he lost the Kingdom!

“I am afraid of the Jews”, King Zedekiah told Jeremiah, and disobeyed God’s word (Jeremiah 38:19)

Herod was afraid of what his guests would think, and beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 6:14-29)

Pilate crucified Jesus because he feared the Jews and wanted to pacify the crowd! (Mark 15:15)

3. How many a Bible is unread because someone is looking? How many times do we hold our tongue because to speak up for God might bring us persecution?

***This “politically correct” culture has capitalized on fear of man to silence the people of God. Personally, I cannot imagine why President Obama would choose to be the first President in American history, (especially a professing Christian President), to choose not to attend the Prayer Breakfast in Washington on the National Day of Prayer except out of fear of man. What kind of message did this send to the young men of America?**

4. Young men value freedom above all things...is living in fear of man “freedom”?
Nay, I say it’s awful bondage.

Young men, I want you all to be free from this bondage. I want you to care nothing for man’s opinion once your path of duty is clear. Believe me, it is a great thing just to say “No!”

J.C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*

(Remember, this was written 125 years ago!)

III. How Can We Help?

A. Teach the Children

1. We ought to start young.
2. We ought to be consistent.
3. We ought to model what we preach.

B. We will conclude this service by praying for our young men, age 30 and under...because *teaching Christ to young men is the only hope for America.*