

THE SINS OF YOUTH

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Text: Ecclesiastes 11:9- 12:1.

Fifty four years ago, at the age of fifteen, I entered the field of evangelism. Our church believed in using their young people and all of us had church responsibilities. We used our voices and chose areas to serve the Lord. The youth choir numbered in the thirties and girl's trios were formed and a men's quartet. I sang second tenor and at youth camp was called to preach. God opened doors and I began my life time of service in the will of the Lord. I have always had a love for the youth of our nation and during my teen age years, God used me to turn many teens to righteousness. I have counseled many thousands and now five decades later I would rather preach to teens than any other. This generation of young people have great potential but also are under the greatest temptations ever faced by teens. Give me your best attention as I point out five of the evils that are befalling our youth.

The first is the LOVE OF PLEASURE. The youth of today is more conscious of the thrill and the lure of things the world offers than ever before. Millions of our youth have been raised in a "who cares" attitude. The desire for thrill, pleasure and satisfaction grows stronger than the quest for knowledge and the responsibility of life. This attitude has been built by listening to MTV and the television set along with rock and roll music. The peer pressure of one's friends often leads to tragic waste of young life. Its constant message is to live it up, have fun and "let it all hang out". Having fun becomes a passion even though God warns "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man" Proverbs 21:17. It is sin to have fun at any cost to yourselves and others. Remember Numbers 32:23, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Countless teens miss church and social growth in the pursuit of pleasure. If you bring home a report card that is under water, (below "C" level), you are in big trouble. Good grades are far more important than parties and fun, fun, fun. Even some pastors and youth leaders fall into this snare and design meetings to keep up with

the exciting patterns set by the world. Meetings are planned to give youth a "blast" instead of evolving them in the things that "last". Now wait a minute! I can read some of your thoughts easily. I am not an old decrepid man that doesn't enjoy fun and laughter. Fun is fun and youth with so much enthusiasm can be expected to laugh and enjoy life. Pleasure should be a break, not a pastime. Watch out for your priorities and keep the things that most matter in the foreground of your life. Don't allow the rush of youthful pleasure to blot out God's daily leading in your life. During your youthful days you must seek the direction of the Lord. You must walk in the center of His will and allow your youth to be shaped as maturity slowly leads you to a lifetime in the field of His choosing. Don't fail in the test but seek God's best

Another sin is the SIN OF REBELLION. No one ever completely shakes the temptation toward this sin. There is rebellion to law and order which causes many to fall into crime. There is rebellion towards school and the regimented rules necessary to develop wisdom and maturity. The Bible warns that in the last days there will be "filthy dreamers who defile the flesh, despise e has dominion, and speak evil of dignities" Jude 8. The thrill of lawbreaking takes on a whole new light after being caught. Honesty is precious, and your testimony must be unspotted in the neighborhood. Law breaking and pranks can ruin you whole future and youthful stunts can mar the rest of your life. I was waiting to cross at a street corner when a car load of teens pulled up. A traffic officer was directing as the light seemed to be not working. One of the teens hollered, "Hey Joe, what are pennies made out of?" Another answered, "Dirty copper." As they drove off I felt for the officer so insulted. Never forget, your student days are vital to later life and success. Rebellion towards parents is also a great downfall. God commands "Obey your parents in the Lord for this is right" Ephesians 6:1. Many feel their parents are old fashioned, too strict, or just aren't "cool" enough to understand. The magnetic appeal of your "peers" can get you in great trouble. You are foolish to write off your parents, make their days of leadership hard and consider them unsympathetic to your growing life and desires. Worst of all, is rebellion towards God. I see so many church teens, slumped down in the

back pew, who couldn't care less what God wants of their life. Proverbs 1:7 states "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom". Your attitude toward God will shape your young days in defeat or victory. The God that made you has a perfect plan for you. If you are wise, you will discipline yourself to find the will of God early, and walk in it. Otherwise your rebellion will encrust your heart and make you unwilling to be anything for God.

Then there is the sin of CHEATING AND DISHONESTY. Cheating is one of education's greatest problems. It has become number one problem even in Christian schools. In public schools it is considered cool to be able to get away with cheating and other forms of dishonesty. I hear often, "there is nothing wrong with cheating unless you get caught". Romans 12:17 requires us to "provide things honest in the sight of all men". Cheating will place a handicap on the rest of your life. It may help you through a test but it will cause you to fail life's test. Cheating is the very same as stealing. God clearly condemns stealing with the warning "thou shalt not steal" Exodus 20:15. How foolish to forget "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" Proverbs 15:3. Soon you want even like what you see in the mirror. It may take time for others to find out but you will always know when you have not been honest. Remember, the chain you forge in anything dishonest will be a binding force all through your life. Crooked business men developed the trait in their youth. Dishonesty will scar your teen days, wreck your future marriage and render you worthless in the service of Christ.

A sin in the same evil family is the LACK OF SELF CONTROL. Little or no control is taught by America's magazines, books, movies, TV and music. All is planned to excite, tempt and challenge young people to ridicule rules and discipline in the rush to do their own thing. The foul jokes, stories and pictures; the attitudes of older companions; and the ear and eye invasion can ruin a promising youth. Many are led to wild, irresponsible decisions that pollute mind and body and destroy future adult life. 32 deadly sex diseases are just waiting to enter your body. Any one of them can bring you great pain, sorrow and even death. You can not only destroy your own

health but that of your future marriage partner. Take it a step further and know you can destroy even the future children that God may allow you to have. This is why "petting" or "making out" is so very deadly. "It is hard to find the brake, with your foot jammed onto the sensual accelerator. You may argue that everyone is doing it but remember, everyone's paying for it. When you rob a girl of her purity or tempt a young man to fall; you have not only abused yourselves, but someone else's husband or wife of tomorrow. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" Proverbs 23:7. You must learn to "flee youthful lusts" II Timothy 2:22. It takes self control to study and to do the things that are right. Without it you will waste away your youth and squander your best days and spend the rest of your life in the dim light of what you could have been if you had just turned your life over to the Lord.

Further sins of today's youth include ALCOHOL, DRUGS, ROCK AND ROLL, THE DANCE AND OTHER LEWD PLEASURES. Alcohol loosens what control you have and causes actions forever to be regretted. It's use contributes to future divorce and horrible traffic accidents. It will forge a chain of lifetime habit and shame you will always regret. Drugs will destroy your health. They will "fry" your brain and make you a slave in bondage. If you are a young man all the sperm to be used in future fathering will be poisoned. by drugs. Young woman, every egg of your motherhood can be tainted with grief for your future children. The short thrill offered can cause a lifetime of ruination. Drugs destroy the brain and thus guarantee you will never rise to your full potential. The pounding beat and evil lyrics of rock and roll have brainwashed millions of teens who will never be their best as adults because of it's habitual, enslaving control. I firmly believe such music is as hard to give up as drugs. Behind the flashing lights, the jungle beat and the perverted message no rock and roll loving youth can remain unscathed. The dance is but the vertical expression of a horizontal desire. A praying knee and a dancing foot do not belong on the same leg. Dim lighting, the proximity of the dancers; coupled to sensual movements, all awaken what you cannot have before marriage. Sooner or later it stirs lust and passion will take over. Beware dating looseness

and be warned that whatever stirs desire in the flesh can end in disaster.. The Bible commands "keep thyself pure" I Timothy 5:22. All believers are commanded to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul" I Peter 2:11. In the pursuit of thrill don't sacrifice what you can never replace. In this case what the world calls "square" is far better than what they call "cool". No one with any sense wants a second hand partner for life. You desire clean water, clean air and should desire and require cleanliness in life. Anyone can pick up a piece of coal and get dirty fondling it but you have to be someone to have a real diamond. Beware whatever clouds and stains your future. It just isn't worth it to give away what you can never regain.

Perhaps the saddest of all youth sins is LEAVING GOD OUT. The Bible urges youth to "remember thy creator in the days of thy youth" Ecclesiastes 12:1. You can shut God out of your present life but you cannot shut him out of your eternity. Remember "it is appointed unto man once to die and after this, the judgment " Hebrews 9:27. You cannot win in life without Him. You must find his will and walk in it with surrendered love and obedience. Set your goals high and pursue your dreams to be faithful to the God who loves you and the Christ who died for you. Get the very best in training at the best school possible. Dare to dream, to sacrifice and to plan to be great in the eyes of the Lord. Give everything spiritual, first place in your life. Memorize scripture, study that Bible, witness to others and be faithful to your church. Most of the habits you will ever form will be during your youth. Wrap you life in good ones for someday you will stand at the judgment throne of God. Your life and how you spent it will be an open book. You will know and see what you could have been. The rewards the Lord has planned for you will be given or withheld. Many of you will suffer loss for the foolish pursuit of life's things that didn't matter. In today's busy teen life every day you fail to pray and study the Word of God, you leave Him out. Wasted hours of television viewing will be regretted. Talents never developed and surrenders never made, will grieve your soul. In closing, some of you are daily committing the greatest sin of all. What is it? The rejection of Jesus Christ who died for you. Surely you know "we have all sinned and come short of the glory of

God" Romans 3:23. I doubt if you are a big enough liar to say you have never sinned. The Bible warns "the wages of sin is death" Romans 6:23. You will never be able to earn salvation. You do not deserve it nor can you work for it. Scripture states "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23. God in His mercy has done everything necessary to save your soul. The final move is up to you. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" Romans 10:13. The choice is yours and the time is now! "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" II Corinthians 6:2.

Prayerfully renounce the sins of your youth. You can exchange worldly, unsatisfying pleasure for complete joy; sinful rebellion for thrilling service; dishonesty for eternal honor; lustful incontinence for Godly control and irreverence for the miracle of walking with God. I humbly pray this message will cause you to avoid the "Sins of Youth" and walk in the Victories of God".