

# The Years



# Of One's



# Youth

**Character Studies Of  
Young People  
Found In The Scripture**

**Prepared By Jeff Smith**

# The Years Of One's Youth



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# The Years Of One's Youth

## Character Studies Of Young People Found In The Scripture

### Lesson 1 – General Introduction

It might seem like an obvious and simplistic statement to make, but God is concerned about the future of children He gives to parents. From the days of the Old Testament (**Deut. 6:5-7**) to the New Testament (**Eph. 6:1-3**), God has certain expectations for young souls who are destined to take their place in an adult world. There is clearly a way for young people to go that will not be abandoned when they reach their adult years (**Prov. 22:6**).

Youth is an exciting time of life. Everything is innocent, fresh, and full of potential. Life is really yet to be lived. Opportunities await that should be seized. Many a young person has been told, “You have your whole life ahead of you. Don’t waste any moments, for they are precious and few.” Yet, youth that is not wasted in “sowing wild oats” is youth that is lived with a view toward judgment. One should not fall for the deception that judgment is a long way off. The proper outlook in one’s youth is expressed in **Eccl. 11:9-10**:

*“Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. So, remove vexation from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.”*

One only has one chance to give God the strength of youth. Life is indeed a vapor that will vanish in the blink of an eye (**Jas. 4:14**). All of us, including the young, are fading like the flower and the shadow (**Job 14:1-2**). If the days of one’s youth are wasted, there will not be sweet memories to sustain during the twilight years of life; we will wring our hands in bitter regret over wasted opportunities. All that will remain for us will be a strong desire to go back and do some things differently - something we cannot do.

We don’t seek to emphasize youth as more important than any other age group. The Lord’s parable in **Mt. 20:1-16** teaches that Christ will receive us at any age when we obey the gospel. Our culture, though, glorifies youth in such a way that it actually gives young people a warped sense of values. Our culture teaches the young people that you really aren’t “with it” or are not somebody unless you wear the right kind of clothing, use the right kind of hair gel, drive the right kind of car, or do the things that everybody else thinks is “cool.” Some things encouraged upon

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## **Lesson 1**

the young are inherently sinful, and must be avoided at all costs. Aside from these, God doesn't really care what brand of clothing you wear, what brand of hair gel you use, or even what type of car you drive. Even if a young person selects the things our culture deems "cool" or "hip," a young person using these things is still going to grow old. What God is interested in is the young growing old with grace and godliness, being useful in the kingdom of His Son.

There are some things the young cannot do. They can't serve as elders in the Lord's church. They cannot serve as role models for younger faith in search of guidance. However, God is still interested in the years of one's youth because it is during these years that decisions are made that shape the future, decisions that often carry life-long consequences. So, in a very important way, the years of one's youth are the most important years of life.

Parents play a vital role in God's scheme for the training of young people in their impressionable years. Yet, they do not have complete control because like their children, they are faced with the same trials and temptations. Often, parents fail to show their children the proper example. Therefore, an objective standard is needed. The Scripture fills this need.

There will come a time when a young man or young woman must stand on his/her own two feet, and have their own faith in God. They will eventually come to the day when they can no longer lean on the faith of their parents. To facilitate this "transition" from youth to adult faithfulness, God has provided the Bible. Within its pages, one can examine various young people who have their lives recorded in inspiration...what they did, what they said, etc. Though our culture is vastly different than the days of the Old or New Testaments, young people are still just that... young people. Peer pressure remains the same. Temptation to sin is the same (**cp. Eccl. 1:9**). The Scripture is full of examples of godly young people that, when studied, can help instruct young hearts today toward behavior that God expects of them. All Scripture is indeed from God, and profitable for doctrine that one can become complete in his/her standing before God (**cp. 2 Tim. 3:16-17**). Studying young people of the Bible is yet another way of proving the truthfulness of this passage.

As we go through these examples, it is not intended to be an academic exercise. It is hoped that as we explore the lives of young people from long ago, we'll see character traits that led them to choose the path they chose, and we'll make the application in our own day and age.

God has blessed you with the years of your youth. He has entrusted you with your most precious asset...your soul, to be returned to Him willingly out of a loving heart. Don't waste such an important time in your life by living for yourself. Give Him the years of your youth while you still have them to give.

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## Lesson 1

### Assignment

After reading the Introduction, come to class prepared to discuss **Eccl. 11:9 - 12:7**. Read this passage several times, and try to outline it in the space below. [*Hint: to better understand the poetic wording of 12:2-6, pay close attention to 11:9 - 12:1*]

### **Admonitions From A Wise Man** **(Eccl. 11:9 - 12:7)**

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## Lesson 2

### Joseph

#### Introduction

The account of Joseph in the Scripture is the most familiar Biblical record of man's faith and how it interacts with God's providence. What makes this most compelling to young people is how we see Joseph relying on mature faith in God beginning at a very young age.

1. Using a dictionary, define "providence." Be able to explain how providence does not at any time violate man's free moral agency.

#### Period 1 In Joseph's Life – Family Life

2. How is Joseph described? (**Gen. 37:2-3**) What was the relationship between Joseph and his father? His brothers? (**Gen. 37:4**)
3. Beginning at **Gen. 37:5**, and looking all way through **Gen. 41:49**, be able to explain how Joseph is being introduced to God's providence at a young age.
4. With respect to his family, what events did God use in Joseph's life to start accomplishing His purpose for Joseph? (**Gen. 37:4-28**) *Thought question*: relate this question back to #1.

#### Period 2 In Joseph's Life – Life As A Slave In Egypt

5. How is Joseph described? (**Gen. 39:6**) Why is this information crucial to the story?
6. What happens to Joseph in **Gen. 39:7-12**? *Thought questions*: in what ways could Joseph have reacted when faced with the actions of Potiphar's wife? How did he react? (**v. 9**) How deep do we know Joseph's faith to be? (**v. 12**) What New Testament passage(s) address this very temptation?

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### Lesson 2

7. What else do these events teach us about God's providence? (**cp. Jas. 1:2-4**)
8. To what cruel reality is Joseph exposed in **Gen. 39:13-18, 19-20**? Of what comforting truth are we reminded in **Gen. 39:21**? (**cp. Heb. 13:5-6**) What else happens in **Gen. 39:22-40:4**?
9. What are the next "turn of events" that shape Joseph's life? (**Gen. 40:5-19**) What seems to be Joseph's overall disposition? (**v. 14**) Yet, what cold reality awaited him? (**Gen. 40:23**)  
*Thought question:* what could this have done for his faith?

### Period 3 In Joseph's Life – Life As A Ruler In Egypt

10. What events transpired that brought significant change to Joseph's circumstances in Egypt? (**Gen. 41:1-36**) What happens to Joseph as a result? (**Gen. 41:37-45**) *Thought question:* how might **Rom. 8:28** be a good commentary on Joseph's life at this point?
11. What "twist of irony" takes place in **Gen. 42:1-17**? (**cp. 37:5-9**) How long has it been since he has seen them? (**cp. Gen. 37:2; 41:46, 53-54; 45:6**)
12. How could Joseph have reacted towards his brothers? How did he react? (**Gen. 45:1-8**)



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## **Lesson 3**

### **Joshua**

#### **Introduction**

The account of Joshua in the Old Testament is one of preparedness. While young people may not always realize it when they are in “the years of youth,” all that their parents do for them is geared for their future. Mothers and fathers want their children prepared to face the adult world when they become of age. This is the story of Joshua. He was a great leader and man of faith. The bulk of revelation about him is in his middle to later adult years. Yet, for him to have done all the good he did in those years, there had to have been the youthful years of preparation. This is the lesson we need so much today.

1. Into what conditions was Joshua born? (Be prepared to discuss the significance of this, considering the follow passages: **1 Chron. 7:27; Ex. 12:12-13, 21-23**).
2. What did Joshua personally witness with respect to these events? How might they have helped establish his faith in God even in his youth? Any applications for us?
3. What one statement about Joshua tells how he was prepared for serving God? (**Num. 11:28**) What all do you think was involved in this role?
4. Think about Joshua “mentoring” with Moses, and be prepared to discuss **Ex. 24:9-14; 32:15-18**. Consider these New Testament passages and be able to discuss how they relate to “mentoring”: **1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7**.

***Keep in mind this “mentoring process” as you answer the remaining questions.***

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### **Lesson 3**

5. What was the first occasion in which Joshua was named in the Scripture? (**Ex. 17:8-13**) Given this “assignment,” what is obviously implied about Joshua, his character? What lesson do you think Joshua learned about that battle? (**cp. Eph. 6:10-13**)
  
6. What adversity did Joshua have to face in **Num. 13-14**? As a Hebrew, what did Joshua know for certain? (**cp. Gen. 12:1**) How strong do we know his faith to be? (**Num. 14:6-9**)
  
7. What was the lesson Joshua had to learn on this occasion? (**cp. Ex. 23:2; 1 Cor. 11:19; Acts 20:30; 1 Tim. 4:1**) What is the application to us?
  
8. Even though he was prepared for great service, what trials did Joshua face? (**Josh. 7:1-15**)
  
9. What memorable words close out the life of Joshua? (**Josh. 24:14-15**) Be able to discuss the connection between this passage and **Num. 11:28**, and the obvious applications for our service to God today.

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## Lesson 4

### David

#### Introduction

David is considered one of the greatest characters in the Old Testament. From humble beginnings as a youth tending his father's sheep to his reign as Israel's greatest king, he has always been regarded as one who had great faith and love for Jehovah. Like Joshua, much that is revealed about him is when he was older. His youth paved the way for his commendable adult faithfulness.

1. What is the first mention of David in the Scripture? (**Ruth 4:17, 22**) Couple these verses with **2 Sam. 7:8-13** & **Acts 2:30**, and be prepared to explain the important plans God had for David.
2. What tragedy is detailed in **1 Sam. 13:5-14**? *Thought question:* using **Acts 13:22** with this passage, how do these verses testify about what God had in mind for David, and what David possessed that qualified him for this work?
3. Into what situation are we introduced to David? (**1 Sam. 16:11**) What was the significance of bringing the sons before the prophet Samuel in **vv. 6-10**? What was the criteria Samuel was using? What was the criteria the Lord was using?
4. What important "work" did David perform in **1 Sam. 16:14-23**? Think about this, especially in light of the events recorded in **1 Sam. 24:1-7, 9-11** and **26:1-2, 7-20**. How did David always view Saul? (**1 Sam. 24:6; 26:11**) Any applications?
5. What monumental event in David's life is recorded in **1 Sam. 17:1-51**? *Thought question:* what did this event give David the first public opportunity to do?

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## Lesson 4

6. Describe Goliath. **(1 Sam. 17:4-7)** How did he challenge the Hebrews? **(1 Sam. 17:8-10, 16)** How did the soldiers in Saul's army react? **(1 Sam. 17:24)** How did David assess this situation? **(1 Sam. 17:26)** *Thought question:* what does this say about David's faith?
  
7. What was David's solution? **(1 Sam. 17:32)** How was his confidence viewed by his brothers? **(1 Sam. 17:28)** What did Saul think about it? **(1 Sam. 17:33)** What was Goliath's ultimate reaction? **(1 Sam. 17:43)**
  
8. How did David convince Saul that he was up to the challenge? **(1 Sam. 17:34-37)** What was the one truth that David remembered, and obviously the Hebrews had forgotten? **(1 Sam. 17:37, 45-46)** What was one reason David was so sure Goliath would not prevail? **(1 Sam. 17:26b, 36b, 43b, 45b)**
  
9. What else shows David knew the battle was not his, but the Lord's? **(1 Sam. 17:38-39, 46)** What was David's primary weapon? *Thought question:* how does **Eph. 6:10, 12-13** teach us the same important lesson?
  
10. For what reason did David engage Goliath in battle? **(1 Sam. 17:46b-47)** *Thought question:* what lesson(s) does this teach us about our spiritual warfare today?
  
11. What kind of friend did David show himself to be to Saul's son Jonathan? **(1 Sam. 20:17)** How do you think this sustained their friendship during the trying days when Saul was hunting David?

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### Lesson 5

# Daniel & His 3 Friends

### Introduction

Daniel is one of the more well known Old Testament characters. Even little children are able to recall his encounter in the lion's den. What many fail to realize is that happened when he was probably in his 80's. As faithful as he was then, he was equally faithful in his youth when it might have been easier to compromise. His 3 friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (better known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego), were equally faithful in their encounter with the king and his fiery furnace. These Hebrews remained true to God, and are great examples of faithfulness to us all, but especially to the young.

*Note: **2 Kings 24:10-16** records Nebuchadnezzar's first deportation of Jews into Babylonian captivity (around 605 B.C.). It was in this first deportation that Daniel & his friends made their way to Babylon, and where the Book of Daniel begins.*

1. What "traumatic" experience changed Daniel's life instantly? (**2 Kings 24:14**) How do you think you would have felt had you gone through such an ordeal?
2. What did the Babylonian king have in mind for Daniel, et al? (**Dan. 1:3-5**) How are Daniel and his comrades described? (**v. 4**)
3. *Thought question:* pretend you are an aspiring youth with great ambitions, and also recognize who Nebuchadnezzar is at this moment in human history. What would be one way to look at such an offer as contained in **v. 5**?
4. What was Daniel's (and by implication, the 3 friends') response? (**Dan. 1:8a**) What is obviously implied about the foods and drink he was offered? In what sense would Daniel be "defiled"? (*Try to use other passage(s) to support your answer.*)

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## Lesson 5

5. What impresses you about Daniel through **1:8**? *Thought question*: how would this apply to any situation a young Christian may face today?
  
6. How is God's involvement illustrated in this episode? (**Dan. 1:9**) What course of action did Daniel take? (**Dan. 1:8b**) What response did he get? (**Dan. 1:10**) What type of person did the commander represent?
  
7. How does Daniel prove to be resourceful? (**Dan. 1:11**) What was his proposal? (**Dan. 1:12-13**) What were the results? (**Dan. 1:14-16**) What lesson(s) do you learn from this?
  
8. What became Babylonian law in **Dan. 3:1-6**? What conflict resulted? (**Dan. 3:12**) How did the king try to gain their compliance? (**Dan. 3:14-15**) What does this sound like to you?
  
9. What was the response of the 3 Hebrews? (**Dan. 3:16-18**) What did this display? What was Nebuchadnezzar's reply? (**Dan. 3:19-20**) How did it turn out? (**Dan. 3:24-29**)

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### Lesson 5

10. What kind of person has Daniel continued to be from his youth to old age? (**Dan. 6:3**) How did this set with his peers? (**Dan. 6:4-5**) What did they do in response? (**Dan. 6:6-9**)
11. How did Daniel react? (**Dan. 6:10**) What is meant by “as was his custom”? [*NKJV*]  
*Thought question*: relate this back to the statement about Daniel in **1:8**, and be able to discuss how it still characterizes Daniel and what lesson(s) we learn from this.
12. What happened as a result of Darius' decree? (**Dan. 6:11-15**) What happened when Daniel was cast into the den of lions? (**Dan. 6:16-23**) How was Daniel saved? (**v. 23**) What happened to Daniel's accusers? (**Dan. 6:24**) What does this teach us?

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## Lesson 6

### Esther

#### Introduction

The story of Esther occurs toward the end of the history of Old Testament Israel. Even though you will not find even one mention of the name of God in this book, His presence is clearly evident as He moves behind the scenes to aid His people. The Book of Esther is, therefore, a story of providence. When we first read of Esther (or Hadassah), she is a young virgin who becomes part of a great saga. As the events unfold, we see her grow in her faith to God and her willingness to boldly step forward and do what she can to help her people. She is a great example to follow.

1. With what scene does the book open? **(1:1-8)** How “joyous” was the feasting? **(vv. 7-8)**  
How was the king personally affected? **(1:10-11)**
2. What was Vashti’s response to Ahasuerus? **(1:12a)** *Thought question*: what do you think of Vashti’s response: justified or rebellious? Why?
3. How did the king respond? **(1:12b)** What was to be done? **(1:13-22)** Why did the king’s advisors see this as potentially dangerous?
4. In what mood do we see Ahasuerus in **2:1**? What do his advisors realize must be done? **(2:4)** What were the particulars of the “queen contest”? **(2:2-3, 12)** Who “enters” the contest? **(2:5-8)** Who was her guardian? **(2: 5-7)** How is she described? **(2:7)** How was she received? **(2:9)** What instructions had Mordecai given her? **(2:10)**
5. *Thought question*: how does Esther show herself to be of good character? **(2:13, 15)**

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6. How did Esther fare in the “queen contest”? **(2:15b-18)** What is recorded in **2:21-23** that will have a bearing later on in this story?
  
7. To whom are we introduced in **3:1**? What kind of man was he? **(3:2-5)** How would you describe Mordecai based on his actions? **(3:2b)** What did Haman plan to do? **(3:6)** How would he accomplish his plan? **(3:8-15)**
  
8. How long from the day the plan was announced until its execution? **(3:13; cp. v. 7)**  
*Thought question:* do you think this was just the Jews’ good fortune? **(cp. Prov. 16:33)**
  
9. What is Mordecai’s reaction when he learns of the plot? **(4:1-2)** When Esther learns of Mordecai’s actions, what does she do? **(4:4-5)** Besides not accepting what Esther gave him, what does Mordecai tell Esther? **(4:7-8)**
  
10. What did Esther think of Mordecai’s idea? **(4:11)** In responding to Esther again, how does Mordecai show he had a great understanding of God and His providence? **(4:13-14)** Why do you think he was so sure the Jews would not perish? **(cp. Jer. 31:31-37)**
  
11. *Thought question:* how does Mordecai’s question in **4:14b** challenge us still today? What principle for our lives is implied in this question?

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12. What did Esther finally decide to do? **(4:16)** How has she grown from “fear” to “faith”?
  
13. What plan does Esther devise to help her people? **(5:1-8)** What happened afterwards that seemed to have “ruined Haman’s day”? **(5:9-13)** What advice was he given? **(5:14)**
  
14. What providential series of events are recorded in **6:1-5**? *[last part of question #6]*  
What does Ahasuerus decide to do, and how does Haman factor into it? **(6:4-12)**
  
15. Finally given the chance to make her request, what is Esther’s plea? **(7:1-4)** What kind of heart does Esther display? Upon learning that Haman was the culprit to which Esther referred, what did Ahasuerus do? **(7:7a)** What did Haman do? **(7:7b-8)** What happened to Haman? **(7:9-10)** How does he serve as a perfect illustration of **Gal. 6:7**?
  
16. Though Haman was now dead, what problem still existed for Esther and her people? **(8:1-3)**  
How would this great tragedy affect more than just this present generation of Jews? What was the solution that Esther and Mordecai devised? **(8:9-14)**
  
17. What feast, still observed by Jews today, resulted from the Jewish slaughter of their enemies?  
**(9:16-22)**
  
18. What great lessons are learned from the Book of Esther?
  - **Prov. 16:18; Lk. 14:11; Psa. 7:14-16**
  
  - **Prov. 3:5-6; Rom. 8:28**

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## Lesson 7

### Timothy

#### Introduction

Timothy is perhaps the best-known companion of the apostle Paul in the New Testament. The first reference to this young disciple is in **Acts 16:1-3**, at the beginning of Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey. Having made a good impression on Paul, Timothy was from then closely connected to the apostle in all his work for the gospel. Paul even wrote 2 epistles to this young preacher, instructing him on preaching the gospel of Christ. Even though you may never become a preacher, as a young person, your faith in the Lord will be greatly enhanced by studying what the Scripture reveals about Timothy.

1. Apparently, from what city did Timothy come? (**Acts 16:1-2**) How is Timothy described? What of his family? What does this emphasize about his faith?
2. Who was his mother & grandmother? (**2 Tim. 1:5**) What bearing did they have on his upbringing, especially his spiritual growth? *Thought question*: what does this emphasize about the impact parents have upon young people, and what our attitude ought to be towards our parents who are trying to guide us spiritually?
3. What else do we learn about Timothy from **2 Tim. 3:14-15**? *Project*: in the space provided, be prepared to outline **2 Tim. 3**, and tell how these 2 verses about Timothy (**vv. 14-15**) fit into the greater context, and what the application would be for us.

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4. What do you think Paul meant by his words to Timothy in **1 Tim. 4:12**? In what way(s) would others “despise” or disdain his youth?
  
5. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised? (**Acts 16:3**) Considering what had just happened in **Acts 15**, why is this significant?
  
6. *Thought question*: by agreeing to be circumcised, what did this display about Timothy’s attitude toward others with respect to the gospel? [*Hint: think of your answer using 1 Cor. 9:19-23*]
  
7. What relationship existed between Paul and Timothy? (**1 Tim. 1:2,18; 2 Tim. 1:2; Phil. 2:19-22**)
  
8. What was Timothy told to “guard”? (**1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14**) **Application**: how does this same admonition apply to Christians, young or old, today?
  
9. What apparently happened to Timothy? (**Heb. 13:23**) What does this suggest about what young people observe in the challenges of older brethren they look up to? Knowing this, how do you think Timothy was able to endure this?

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### Lesson 8

# The Rich Young Ruler

### Introduction

The nameless “Rich Young Ruler” stands out as an earnest man in search of eternal life – until he understands what it will cost him. Remember...Jesus warns us to be ready to “count the cost” of discipleship (**Lk. 14:26-33**). Materialism is not just a topic of concern for adults. Realistically, the seeds of materialism are sown in the years of one’s youth, and they begin to bear their fruit in our adult years. Studying this young man while we are young may well prevent us from becoming materialistic when we are older.

The episode of The Rich Young Ruler can be found in **Mt. 19:16-24**; **Mk. 10:17-23**; and **Lk. 18:18-25**. For this lesson, ***we will primarily use Mark’s account.***

1. How do we know he was a “rich young ruler”? [*Use all the gospel accounts.*]
2. Do we have any insight into how earnest this young man was? (**vv. 17, 20**)
3. *Thought question:* given the fact that the young man called Jesus “good Teacher,” how does Jesus’ response in **v. 18** set the stage for what He will say later? (**v. 21**)
4. What does Jesus say in **v. 19**? What is obviously implied about the young man by Jesus repeating these particular commands?
5. Judging from **v. 21**, how do we know there is a deeper issue than just this young man keeping the commandments of God? When the Bible says Jesus “looked at him,” what do you think this involved? (**cp. Jn. 2:24-25**)

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### Lesson 8

6. What was Jesus' reply to the young man's statement in **v. 20**? (**v. 21**) What did Jesus feel for him? Though the young man came asking for eternal life, how did Jesus style His reply? (**v. 21**) How appropriate was this?
  
7. In what sense was this the "one thing he lacked?" How "radical" do you think this was?  
*[Consider **Mt. 6:19-20** in your answer.]*
  
8. How did the young man's mood change from **v. 17** to **v. 22**?
  
9. *Thought question:* what did Jesus **not do** after the young man went away? What does this tell us about what God demands from us in serving Him? (**cp. Mt. 22:37**)
  
10. Although he was willing to bow his knee (**v. 17**), what was the young man not willing to do?
  
11. *Thought question:* think of this encounter between Jesus and this young man, read Jesus' final observation in **v. 23**, and be ready to discuss the relevance of **Prov. 23:5** as well as what Paul teaches in **1 Tim. 6:6-12, 17**.
  
12. List ways in which young people trying to live for Christ today have to fight materialism, and how such a battle can be won.