

Letters to Young People

Though I can remember with reasonable clarity what it was like to be a teenager, it seems that growing up as a young person nowadays can be a pretty difficult thing. There are certainly a lot of pressures and troubles that I don't really remember, and the presentation of young people in the media is generally very negative. Even in lessons like this, the emphasis is frequently on what young people should not do. Although I won't claim that I won't do that in this series from time to time, because it is important, for now I'd like to concentrate on some positive aspects of being a young person today.

Have you ever wondered why it was that Jesus used children as an example when He was teaching?

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,
And said, verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18: 2-4).

It's worth noting that the Greek term used for 'child' here can also include older children; in other words teenagers, like you. Rather than saying (as most do) that young people need to be more like adults, Jesus is here saying that adults need to have more of the attitudes of young people! He recognized that as people get older they often lose those attributes that are the most beautiful in young people – things like the ability to learn, an open and honest heart, even the ability to love and be loved.

By all means as you grow older, add those things to your life that you need to – wisdom, stature, favor with God and man (Luke 2: 52). But don't leave behind, or think immature, those characteristics that make you the beautiful people you are! You have such an ability to love, support and encourage one another. You have frankness and an honesty with your feelings and your hopes that many older people have lost.

I'm thankful for the young people I know. I can't think of any of you without it bringing a smile to my face, and, maybe occasionally, even a tear to my eye! I'm inspired by your courage and your determination, and I value your friendship and your respect more than you can know. You are all amazing, beautiful, inspirational, awesome people with SO much potential – don't let this world get you down with its negativity, because you are so much better than that.

I'll close with a Scripture and a quote from Khalil Gibran, one of my favourite poets. Though Gibran meant it in reference to one's own children, I think it can be applied also to all the young people I know.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in spirit, in faith, in purity (I Timothy 4: 12).

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday (Khalil Gibran, The Prophet).

Remember who you are.