

Youth and Choices: What Should I Do?

Dana Johnson

As a young believer looks to their future, they are faced with many choices and decisions. The temporal pursuits that are before them are important and good and should be taken seriously. James writes, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (1:17).

God Gives Gifts to All

God has given each of His children a gift or a talent to be used in His service. Even in our temporal pursuits, we know that God has given each of us gifts, and we should be good stewards of these gifts. This can sometimes cause uncertainty when we look ahead. Are we following the plan God has set for us, or are we attempting to set out on our own plan? Yet this is not something that we should be troubled over. God in His Word gives many examples of how He will provide for His children when they remain faithful. Luke writes, “But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (12:31). We can trust in God and know that His plan for us is the best plan.

Still, we must make plans. We can’t just sit idly waiting for things to happen. In due time, our plans will see the increase of God’s blessings, just as the early Christian Church was increased through the labors of the early believers. Apostle Paul writes, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6).

Ask Questions, Visit with Others

We can put our trust in God each day, even though we may still have difficulties. In choosing a path to travel, one question we can ask ourselves is, “what should I do?” This can sometimes be a difficult question to answer, especially today when there are so many options. For some it can be an easy decision.

But why can it sometimes be so difficult? It can even start with our closest and dearest friends. We often find them to be those with similar interests to us. But what if these close friends are looking to go directly into the workforce and I have had a desire to go to school a little longer? Or what if I want to go directly into the workforce, but my closest friends are heading off to college? Sometimes we can feel pressure to take a path that may not be the one we want to take. In this way it’s good to have honest discussions with those around us, our friends and our family.

We can also seek out a trusted role model to visit with. This person can be one who is working in a job we might be considering, who is likely very willing to discuss the joys (and difficulties, even mistakes)

in his or her temporal calling. This way we can gain information to help us decide. These discussions might help us decide if college or a particular occupation is something we will enjoy and value. Most importantly, our career choice should not get in the way of keeping Christian fellowship with all in God's kingdom. It is often said that God's children make up a level-headed flock. This can also be interpreted in our temporal lives. One's position or career does not provide status in God's kingdom.

Trust in God's Care and Plan

Dear young believer, trust that God has a plan for you. You have a role to play in His plan, but you can prayerfully consider the possible opportunities that there are for you. Often, it isn't until later when reflecting on time past, that we see how God has guided our plans and our lives and how He has richly blessed us.

God's Plan Is Best

Maddy Simonson

As I get in my car, with my backseat full of textbooks and a change of clothes for work later, I glance at a note taped to the ceiling of my car. I sing words from song of Zion 471, verse 4, that are written there:

*Jesus, I receive from You, days of honest labors,
that my gifts might all be used serving all my neighbors.
Bless my work and bless my rest; bless my times of study.
Give me peace, contentedness in each task and duty.*

Peace fills my heart and I hope that I can do all my tasks and duties with a willing heart. As I drive, my thoughts wander to the past years since graduating from high school. I thought I had it figured out perfectly. I moved across the country and was ready to start nursing school, but I quickly learned that was not what God had planned for me. A couple months later, I found myself driving back home to Minnesota with my car loaded up, tears of joy and thankfulness rolling down my face. It hadn't gone as I thought it would, but I felt content because God was showing me His plan, and that is far better than mine.

I snap back into reality as I arrive at my friend's house and walk in, where five other believers around my age have their books and laptops open, ready to study for another nursing exam. We greet each other with "God's peace" and again, I feel lucky that we have been given each other to go through nursing school with. We've discussed our reasons for why we chose to pursue nursing. Despite our own

inspirations that brought us here, we agreed that being a nurse offers a flexible schedule, especially important to us girls if someday, we are blessed with children.

While I work on becoming a nurse, I need to support myself financially. I do this by caring for elders at a nursing home and supporting believing girls in a group home. I feel satisfied with my career choice when I work, because it's rewarding to serve others. I believe that this is the path that God has chosen for me at this time in my life. I pray that I can always be obedient and trust in His plan for me.

As I end my day, I am thankful that God has answered my prayer and blessed my work and studies and given me peace and contentment in my tasks and duties. I pray that He blesses my rest and continues to guide me on the path to heaven.

My Support Group

Tina Loukusa

My support group – my friends and escorts in faith – is my everything. Of course, first I lean on God and living faith, but it's an incredible feeling and gift to know that regardless of what I experience in life, I have friends in faith that are always there.

It hasn't always been this way. For a number of years as a teenager and even as a young adult, I didn't share a closeness with my friends and family. Because I didn't have close relationships, I didn't have somebody to notice if something was wrong, and this made it easier to fall into temptation and sin. My parents worried about me, but I wasn't free to share my struggles. I was always "just fine." I know now that the absence of close friends to share dreams and disappointments with, to be there for each other in the ups and the downs in life, and to share the mutual journey of faith with, was missing.

Looking back, I know I wasn't "just fine." I was troubled, but maybe didn't even know it myself. As a teenager my thoughts focused around: will I be accepted? My actions and decisions were influenced by what I thought others would like. I now see this as detrimental to my walk of faith and also to my personal well-being. I made many decisions that negatively affected me.

Over the years since then God has given me many good believing friends and has also allowed me to develop close relationships with my family. As these friendships started to develop, I realized how much joy this brought into my life and how much I needed them to support me in my walk of faith. We never know what trials will come in life and what we'll be tempted by each day. It's so important to have believing escorts to reach out to. I'm thankful to have friends and family who are ready to lend a listening ear and who can preach the gospel whenever it's needed.

As I've gotten older, the joy of friendship has increased knowing that my friends accept me with both my strengths and weaknesses. And it doesn't matter if we're different from each other. Most importantly, they care for my undying soul. I thank God for blessing my life in this way. I hope and pray that young people today see the importance of choosing friends who care for their undying soul more than any temporal matters on earth.

My Place in God's Kingdom

Chad Muhonen

There are many duties in God's kingdom that believers, also the youth, partake in because there is a need and they have been asked to serve. No duty is more important than the next. What is important is that when asked, one would be willing to serve in whatever way he or she can, using the gifts God has given them.

As a member of God's kingdom, I've often asked myself why I was asked to perform this or that duty – surely there is someone better suited for that role! It's easy to think that we don't have the time or the skills to perform certain duties.

My experience in contributing in small ways has helped me in my walk of faith. I remember one year when Summer Services were in Cokato, outdoor showers needed to get built and it sounded like there was a shortage of guys and not much time to put them together. A few of us showed up and the project was underway – there were many helping hands. It was a cheerful crew and we got it done with plenty of time to spare.

I have found myself to be lacking in many ways when asked to serve. For example, I was on a church cleaning crew in Rockford and I didn't make it too often. I remember thinking to myself: *If they need me, they will text me, or I'm too busy, or there are plenty of others to do the cleaning, or I didn't see the schedule.* These were poor excuses and I'm ashamed that I was lacking in those duties. Some duties don't seem to be as hard or appealing as other ones and some required more time and energy to perform.

No matter how weak a person feels in serving God's congregation, what is important is the willingness to serve. When one has a positive attitude and is willing to serve in whatever way they are asked, God blesses this. If you are just getting confirmed this summer or if you have graduated and are becoming a member of your home congregation and get asked to serve in whatever way you can, pray for a willing heart. This will help you to be in the center of God's flock.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to plan for the future?
2. How can we discuss our future plans with friends and family?
3. How can we find a mentor or a role model, and how should we approach them?
4. What is a Bible verse (or verses) you reflect on when considering the future? Why does that verse mean so much to you?