

# The REFLECTOR

## Young Christians Working, With Wisdom

by Royce Chandler

"Young Christians of today are the church of tomorrow" — what a thoroughly false and misguided statement! If young Christians are not made an active part of local churches today, those churches, between now and tomorrow, will die.

In all my childhood it was common to hear sermons outlining the spiritual responsibilities of *adults*. Memorable lessons were preached on the work of *elders* and of *deacons*; we were sometimes treated to "specials" on the role of *women* in the church and often were taught the duties of *parents* in nurturing their children in righteousness. Periodically, sermons were addressed to young Christians and to children generally, but they all centered on such topics as self-control, dancing, morals, the need to be baptized, and such like. To the best of my memory, we never heard a lesson focusing upon us youngsters as *workers*, specifically describing the work God expects young Christians to perform.

Christians — regardless of age — have work to do. The church is not something to get involved in "when I grow up." Neither is it something that only Dad, Mom, and other grownups do. Any boy or girl old enough and mature enough to commit himself to Jesus in baptism is old enough to work. If a child is not ready to "get busy" in the Lord's vineyard, he is not ready to be immersed.

It is enlightening to notice the attention paid to youth in the Scriptures. Through Moses, Jehovah strongly commanded His people to teach and to train their children to serve Him: "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul; and ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall

teach them your children, talking of them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy

**In my childhood it was common to hear sermons on the spiritual responsibilities of adults . . . elders . . . deacons . . . women . . . parents . . . To the best of my memory, we never heard a lesson focusing upon us youngsters as workers . . .**

house, and upon thy gates; that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Jehovah sware unto your fathers to give them as the days of the heavens above the earth" (Deut. 11:18-21).

And he stressed the extreme importance again: ". . . Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify unto you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, even all the words of this law. For it is no vain thing for you; because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over the Jordan to possess it" (Deut. 32:46-47). If those parents thought such thorough training to be an indifferent matter, they were terribly mistaken; their very life as God's people depended upon it, as did the lives of their children. The adults were required to teach and to train; the children, to learn and to work.

If children were so important under that imperfect and inferior covenant, how much greater attention do they merit under the new and perfect testament?!

God's special concern was shown to them not only through Moses, but also through the two Old Testament books written especially for adolescents — *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*; the first teaching them how to discipline their lives with wisdom, prudence, and common sense, and the second showing them that the only truly happy and profitable pursuit in life is the work of righteousness.

Jesus used children to teach some of His most profound lessons:

- (1) His statement to Joseph and Mary at age twelve, to show the claim God has upon us, even at the earliest ages of our lives (Luke 2:49);
- (2) His raising dead children to life, to prove His Sonship and to give hope for eternity (Mark 5:35-43; Luke 7:11-15); and,
- (3) His using children to illustrate

the righteous hearts of heaven's heirs (Mark 10:13-16).

Were you to write a list of outstanding Bible heroes, perhaps you would think of old Abraham offering, in simple yet profound obedience, his only son of promise. Aged, battle-scarred Paul might come to mind, or those mature, fiery prophets of old. Such faithful stalwarts are great and deserve our love and praise, but have you contemplated all the righteous heroes who were mere children?

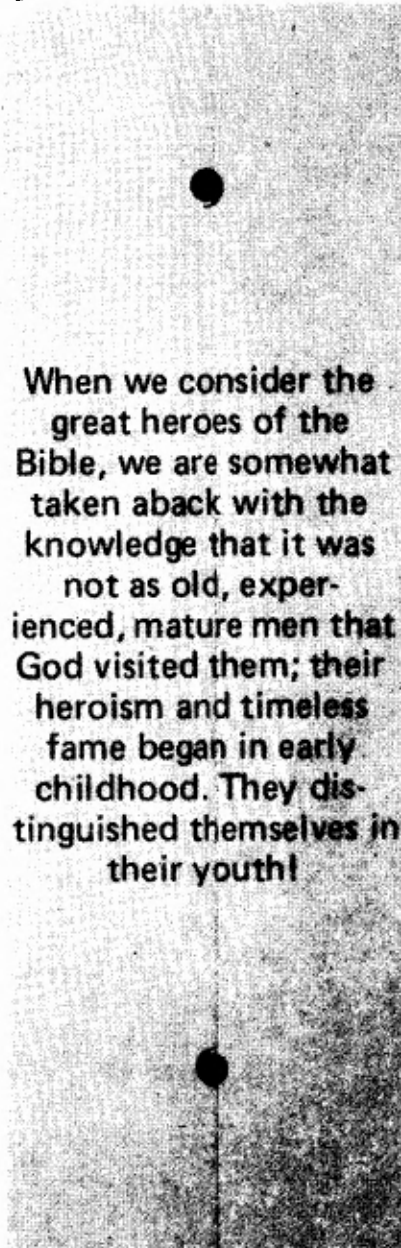
**Joseph** had an unusual life; we recall his dreams, his brothers' jealousy, his enslavement in Egypt, and his rise to glory. While many figurative and practical lessons are taught (Christ's mission and relation to His brethren, the providence of God, the rewards of virtue, *et. al.*), the signal fact remains that Joseph was only seventeen years old when God took unusual notice of him, showing him the dreams of his family bowing before him (Genesis 37:1-11). Just a teenager — but singled out by God to become one of the grandest heroes of all history.

In only his late teens or early twenties, he fled from the seductive advances of Potiphar's wife; and when only thirty, Pharaoh appointed him Prime Minister of Egypt (Gen. 41:46).

Look at him: sold by his own brothers and forcibly taken into a foreign country while only a young boy; all alone in an idolatrous and immoral society; unjustly thrown into prison for nearly thirteen years, but, from beginning to end, holding solidly to the teaching of his parents and to his faith in God! This all means that as an immature, inexperienced kid in an ungodly land, Joseph had to purposely set his mind on being true to his training. He was unusual in this determination but did nothing that teenagers today cannot imitate. Joseph succeeded because he *intended* to be faithful; it was no accident, nor was he just lucky — Joseph was outstanding *on purpose*. An unforgettable hero, but just a kid.

**David** was only a young boy when he marvelously killed Goliath. As an older and mature man we lose some respect for this mighty king for, then, his weaknesses brought him sin and shame. But as a young boy, God showed David with special attention, honoring him as "a man after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14).

**Samuel** was devoted to God, by his mother, as a baby (1 Sam. 1), and was raised by old Eli. It was as a small child that Jehovah called him in the night, showing to all that "Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah" (1 Sam. 3:20). The great Samuel: devoted, divinely honored, and *working* as a little boy.



**When we consider the great heroes of the Bible, we are somewhat taken aback with the knowledge that it was not as old, experienced, mature men that God visited them; their heroism and timeless fame began in early childhood. They distinguished themselves in their youth!**

**Isaac** was at least old enough to carry the wood for his own altar, but his exact age is unknown. Regardless of the faith and the sacrifice that made Abraham a hero, what sort of trust and submission was required of Isaac for him to yield to his own death? If your father was about to sacrifice you, what would you do? To our knowledge, Isaac neither argued nor tried to

escape; he thus equalled, in a sense, the heroism of his Dad. Trusting, submissive, obedient even to extremes — all of this while just a "little leaguer."

**Solomon** made a mess of his life as an adult but won God's heart as a child. He was only fourteen to eighteen years old when he immortalized his name by praying for wisdom instead of for money and power. To be a teenage king over the greatest nation in the world is an almost impossible task, at best. While his "schoolmates" of today would be dragging main street or practicing ball, this special child was on his knees praying for God's help. Such is the substance of God's true heroes.

**Daniel** was only twelve to fifteen when carried off into Nebuchadnezzar's court. Though he moved in an idolatrous society, lived in the king's court, and was taught by unbelieving ministers, Daniel was true to his early training. This took an intentional effort, especially when faced with the gruesome option of a lions' pit. That young prophet had developed an unbending and working trust in his God: an eternal monument to mature faith, but only a young boy.

**Shadrack, Mesback and Abednigo** shared the same captivity with Daniel and were his same age. Though in a land of unbelievers, they unflinchingly refused to yield to the king's threats of a fiery death. Keeping their knowledge of Jehovah and their youthful but genuine faith, these boys successfully served God because they *meant* to.

When we consider these great heroes, we are somewhat taken aback with the knowledge that it was not as old, experienced, mature men that God visited them; their heroism and timeless fame began in early childhood. They distinguished themselves in their youth! What a moving tribute and challenge to young believers!

"What can we do?" young Christians will ask; my reply is, "What can't you do?" The best way to get started is to stop waiting for someone to tell you what to do. Open your eyes to all that needs doing, listen to the dreadful silence of non-working hands, and then take the initiative. Get involved in every phase of the local work: public worship, Bible classes, home Bible studies, work groups, visitation work, the bulletin, radio, gospel meetings, distributing tracts, etc.

**As an example of what can be done,**

let me praise the young Christians of the church in Danville, Kentucky. Their example may motivate others their own age to see their own potential and to get busy. In the past three years, this group of teenage Christians has engaged in the following:

1. First, and most important, all fifteen high school students have obeyed the Lord, as have seven of our twelve junior high students.

2. Being dissatisfied with what they found in the tract rack, these enterprising youngsters, entirely on their own, decided to write their own tract to distribute to their schoolmates. Having received the elders' approval, they made it a summer's project for 1974. Organizing themselves and their plans, they assigned the topics, wrote the material, printed it, and assembled it. Besides being a really good tract, it is a marvelous recommendation of their genuine interest and zeal.

3. In March of '74, this group held a home Bible study for themselves and their friends; average attendance was around twenty-five and, either directly or indirectly, several baptisms resulted.

4. At least five of the teenage boys regularly participate in a program using the first Sunday evening of every month to let one of the local male Christians preach a "full-length" sermon.

5. All the other young men in the church, with hardly an exception, take their turn making five-minute talks every Wednesday evening. Every first Wednesday of the month is used for letting all the young boys and several adult men practice public Bible reading, praying, leading singing, and making announcements; all participate willingly.

6. Twice each month, at least ten of the teenagers help in visiting the shut-ins, the sick, delinquent members, and new contacts.

7. These Christians have brought more outsiders to our gospel meetings than the adults, and have done much to advertise those meetings.

8. Several are helping to teach classes on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

9. In our last gospel meeting, with Bob Buchanan, about fourteen of these young saints signed up for an evening to have Bob all to themselves during the dinner hour, and treated him to a really good time.

10. For three summers now, this church has supported young men intending to enter full-time preaching work, giving them experience and training for that. The teenagers have done more than any other group to encourage, to help, and to entertain these men, who include Bruce Edwards, Jr., Barry Hudson, and, currently, Rick Lanning.

11. In April of this year, all these youngsters met for the specific purpose of planning, as a part of the local effort, their summer's work. They drew up a thirteen point plan which included these:

- a. planning a get-together for Rick Lanning, involving just him and the young people;
- b. arranging another home Bible study for both themselves and their friends;

●

**As an example of what  
can be done, let me  
praise the young Christians  
of the church in  
Danville, Kentucky . . .  
Being dissatisfied with  
what they found in the  
tract rack, these youngsters  
decided to write  
their own tract to dis-  
tribute to their school-  
mates.**

●

- c. asking Rick to teach them, either in regular Wednesday night study or in a special session, on the various human denominations of which their friends are members;
- d. arranging periodic outings of a social nature, to promote their affections and relationships with each other;
- e. going door to door one evening per week, introducing a correspondence course;
- f. attending the monthly singing of a local church in Lexington, Kentucky;
- g. attending, as a group, various gospel meetings in the area;
- h. helping with the daily one-minute radio spots; several have written and recorded these;

- i. trying to include other area teenagers, who are Christians, in their social get-togethers.

12. Another result of that planning session, but deserving of special note, is their project of writing, editing, printing, and distributing a weekly bulletin especially for patients in local hospitals and nursing homes. Doing all the work by themselves, they print an excellent bulletin and do much good through their work.

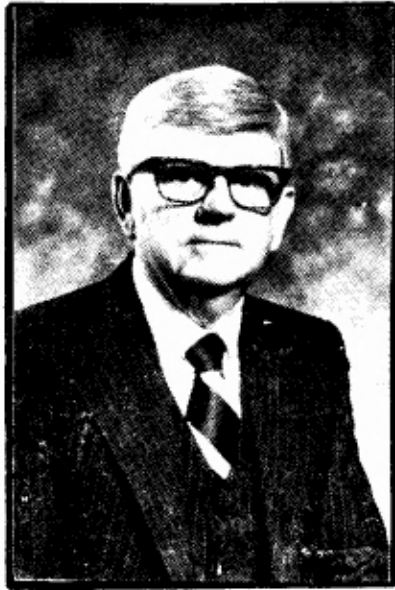
13. Also included in their plans was the desire to visit the elderly patients in these homes, one Sunday afternoon per month. When they decided on the bulletin, they combined both plans and are now visiting these patients every Sunday as they distribute their bulletins.

Let some think these kids overreached themselves in their planning, let me say that all of these plans, in one form or another, either have already been or are now in the process of being carried out. These young Christians are unusual, not in any superior intelligence or skill, but in their determination to do their share of the work. To me, they are lofty, exhilarating heroes -- a strong breeze of fresh air in a world full of stagnant pessimism.

This entire article has dealt only with the first part of its title, "Young Christians Working . . ." The second half, ". . . With Wisdom," is supplied by those far-seeing, experienced adults who have encouraged and helped these children to develop and to use themselves so wisely. Their parents deserve first credit, and they are followed by the elders of the local church who have never said "No" to a worthy, scriptural endeavor on the part of these young believers. The kids have responded graciously to the wise advice given by various ones and have greatly appreciated it. It is this sort of deliberate intention to work, coupled with humble submission to the authority of the Scriptures and of the elders, that places these kids in the same category as each of those previously noted immortal heroes of faith.

May other young saints be encouraged to pick up the torch and do much greater work than these were ever able to accomplish! And God bless them all. ●

Hear Evangelist



**BILLY ASHWORTH**

You Are Invited To Attend A

## **Gospel Meeting**

**March 30 - April 5**

---

**TIME OF SERVICES**

Sunday Bible Study  
Worship  
Evenings

9:45 A.M.  
10:45 A.M.  
7:30 P.M.

---

**Fultondale Church Of Christ**

Volume 21, Number 2. **THE REFLECTOR** is published monthly by the church of Christ, meeting at 2005 Elkwood Drive, Fultondale, AL 35068. Our mailing address: 3004 Brakefield Drive, Fultondale, AL 35068. Second Class postage is paid at Fultondale, AL 35068. **Edited by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.** Phone (205) 841-5293.