

The Fountain of Youth in Service

Because of the adult work world in which we live we have been conditioned to go full steam ahead, putting forth our best effort, with the goal of being productive. Sometimes we put blinders on and fail to recognize the valuable resource right next to us. In many cases that resource is our kids, or other youth in our community and church.

You probably remember times when you got frustrated and called on the younger generation to program the VCR. Now, you call on them to fix the settings on the cell phone or computer. Younger people grew up in an environment of technological evolution, and often are much savvier in technology than we are.

Don't limit the value of youth to just expertise in technology. The young have hearts of gold, often uncluttered by social norms or political correctness. They do things simply because it is the right thing to do and they have the talent. They are refreshingly genuine. They may have observed how we do things and often have found a better or simpler solution. They are usually respectful, in many cases, just waiting to be asked to pitch in.

They have outstanding abilities and just need the chance to show them. Let me give a few examples of youthful Servant Leadership abilities:

- A middle school student returned from an international church mission trip, having served severely underprivileged families in a foreign country. Once back in the states she saw local needs as well. She started a blanket ministry for the homeless in the area. She was acting on her faith and with a heart to serve.
- Two teens went on this year's mission trip and were much beloved by the Ecuadorian people. One wowed the children with magic tricks and creative balloon animals while the other showed genuine love for others. Kids flocked to both as the teens had become role models for the children. Both teens did their share of leading devotionals with the adults, showing a mature level in their faith.
- I saw a recent news account of a young boy who raised enough money to pay for a police service dog for a local police officer. The boy showed a willingness to support law enforcement officials in his community at the very time when law enforcement was being criticized in the media.
- Every time a high school student reads the scripture lessons in church I feel a sense of appreciation. They read it with compassion and understanding. It is refreshing to hear God's Word coming from the mouths of youth. When we pray for the values of the next generation we see them share their faith in front of our very eyes.

In each example the youth fulfills the verse from 1 Timothy 4:12, which says, *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

The Bible is full of examples of youthful abilities. A 12-year old Jesus astounded the teachers in the temple. *"And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" Luke 2:46-47*). Young Joseph was sold into Egypt as a seventeen year old, and already he had had dreams from the Lord (read Genesis 37:1-18). Young David offered to fight Goliath, the Philistine giant who was challenging Israel, but King Saul was dubious because David was so young. Saul said, *"... thou art but a youth, and he [Goliath] a man of war from his youth."* David prevailed (read 1 Samuel 17: 33, 37).



The Bible shows that God blesses youth who are willing to serve. Today's youth, also, are fine examples of everything Paul stated in that verse from Timothy – talented, loving, well-spoken and being people of faith. Youth who live by faith are servants of the Lord with a lifetime of opportunities still in front of them. We adults can look *up* to today's youth as fine examples to follow.

Question: Name 3 youth you know who are excellent examples of servant leadership.

Prayer: Dear Lord. We thank you for servant leaders of any age, who share Your love with others. It is especially gratifying when young people reflect a positive upbringing or perhaps overcome difficult circumstances to become great examples for us all. Empower them to serve you and let us give them the opportunity. Amen.