

THE IDEAL TEENAGER

We commend Brother Jerry Anderson for an outstanding lesson last Sunday, directed primarily to our youth. We deem it fitting to follow this up with a fine article by Brother J. Walker Whittle penned some 17 years ago. Indeed we think our teenagers here at West Side fall into the “Ideal” category.

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity.” (I Timothy 4:12). From this admonition of Paul to young Timothy, the image of the ideal teenager emerges. There may be doubt in the mind of some that teenagers have any concept of the ideal. Suspecting this, I determined to find out from the teens themselves what characteristics would constitute the ideal. In vacation Bible schools and youth classes during gospel meetings in Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee this past summer, I asked teenagers to tell me what the ideal would be like. May I share with you the 22 positive characteristics suggested and recommend them to all teenagers? The characteristics have been divided into four categories.

The first category consists of 7 characteristics relating to ideal daily living. They are *considerate* (Ps. 25:18; Prov. 6:6ff); *courteous*, meaning polite and good manners (Phil. 1:27; I Pet. 2:11,12); *thoughtful* (Ps. 8:4; 115:12; I Tim. 1:4; Eccl. 12:1); *friendly*, pleasant, cordial, and genial (Prov. 18:24); *kind* (Eph. 4:32); *happy* (Prov. 17:22; 3:13; 14:21; 16:20) and *helpful* useful and needed (Col. 3:23, 24; Eccl. 9:10).

The second category considers the outward appearance and the fewest characteristics were listed. To be *healthy*, *clean* and *neat* seems most important (I Cor. 3:16, 17, 6:19, 20; Prov. 18:20; II Cor. 7:1; Heb. 9:14; I Tim 2:9; I Pet 3:3, 4). Teenagers know the value of *good health* (I Cor. 3:16, 17). *Cleanliness* is a desirable virtue (Prov. 18:20; II Cor. 7:1; Heb. 9:14) and *neatness* was stressed (I Tim. 2:9; I Pet 3:3, 4).

The third category has to do with inward virtues which are so important in facing the responsibilities of life. These teenagers emphasized the significance of being *respectful* (I Tim 5:1; James 4:7; I Pet 2:13-18); *obedient* (I Sam. 15:22; Col. 3:21, 22; Eph. 6:1, 2; Rom. 6:16-18); John Duran—overseas. Kyle Nester— in Iraq Erich Felps—in Iraq, *honest* (Phil. 4:8; II Cor. 8:21; I Thess. 4:11, 12); *trustworthy* (Prov. 25:19; II Cor. 8:22); *truthful* (Prov. 23:23; Acts 5:3; Col 3:9); and *industrious* (Matt. 25:14-30).

The fourth category lists those characteristics which show one's relationship to God. Consider these: *faithful* (Lk 16:10; James 2:24; Rev. 2:10); *self-controlling* (II Pet. 1:5,6; Gal. 5:22,23; Mt. 16:24,25); *generous* (Lk 6:38; II Cor. 8:3-5); *thankful* (Col. 3:15,17); *religious* (I Cor. 15:58; Mt. 11:28-30); and *loving* (I Cor. 13:2; II Pet. 1:5-7). Such characteristics would be sufficient to lead one from being a babe in Christ to that state of perfection (Heb. 6:1) which will make one a full grown man in Christ.

Being privileged to work with teenagers year after year causes me to be filled with much gratitude. This youthful generation is informed, courageous, dedicated, and spiritually inclined. The teenagers of today are looking for good examples, understanding and guidance on the part of those who are older and among their peers. Possibly this is why they turn more readily to their peers for answers. I have great faith in this generation and believe one day they will bring us much joy because of their accomplishments in our nation, state, community, and especially the church.

Did the parents of yesteryear live up to this ideal? Do parents even closely resemble it today? If the ideal is good enough for the teenagers, would it not be helpful to parents? I am convinced that a generation gap is a figment of the mind among those who are so inflexible that they refuse to respond, except to condemn. "Aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience: that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, ... the younger men likewise exhort to be sober minded: in all things showing thyself an example of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorrupt ness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned." (Titus 2:2-8a)

This is an admonishment (complement) by the elders of a congregation of a Sister congregation.