

Understanding People

Professor
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Lesson One

As we begin this lesson into Understanding People, a short introduction is in order. Why do we need a class like this? Well, the answer to this is easy. Not everyone is the same. Age, geographical regions, upbringing, and even environment all play a part into how a person can be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Also this class primarily focuses on “developmental” differences in people, the student should also research the other factors mentioned above when considering soul winning.

As we start to delve into this subject, it is good to remember that every adult was once an adolescent. Every adolescent was once a child, and every child was once an infant and toddler. While there are many variations in the smaller steps of individual development, the ultimate journey is predictable for all human beings. Our Creator designed the pattern from the very beginning of time. In Genesis 1:26 we read that God made us in His likeness and image. Further, He created us “male and female”, and He declared that this creation was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). And then in Genesis 1:26-28 we are told that we were to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill and subdue the earth. This is just one of the traits unique to the creation of mankind that we see in Scripture. Although all of God's living creatures were made from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), only mankind was told to subdue the earth. Only of mankind was it said that God breathed into them the breath of life, and only of mankind is it said that God walked and talked with them (Genesis 3:8). In fact, humans are valuable because God created them with the highest degree of correlation to Himself.

Furthermore, God created mankind for His pleasure. We were created to love Him, to worship Him and to serve Him. God pursues an intimate relationship with mankind. However, due to sin, we are now eternally separated from Him. True developmental growth requires that we grow in accordance to God's design. But, since we are separated from Him due to sin, we do not grow the way we should. We have a big hole within us where God is suppose to be. But He is not there. Therefore, mankind sets out to fill that hole with all kinds of things. Money, sex, work, family, drugs, violence, and even religion are used to fill that hole, but none of it works. From early adolescent through old age, this “searching” continues. Everyone has this hunger to fill that emptiness, and our job as children of God is to take the message of salvation to them. Only Jesus Christ can fill that emptiness. Only Jesus Christ can satisfy. His shed blood on the cross paid the price for the sin that separated us from Him, and now He calls all men to repentance (Luke 5:32). Once a person accepts Jesus as their Saviour, He comes in and dwells within them (1 Cor. 3:16). That emptiness is gone, joy and fellowship is restored, and an everlasting purpose is born.

Understanding this spiritual condition that mankind has is the first step in understanding people. For the Christian trying to understand the complete process of development, this spiritual domain must be understood, recognized and confronted face to face. You can not understand a person unless you first meet them on this spiritual level. Regardless of age, geographical location, environmental factors, or any other external factor, the spiritual condition of a person must first be understood. As we look at the different developmental stages, we will address this spiritual aspect, how to minister to them, and what to look for.

Even though human development is a process with each step building off of the step before it, for our

purpose here we will break each part down into small sections. The three larger categories of the human lifespan under which all the other smaller segments fall are “childhood”, “adolescence”, and “adulthood”. In biblical times there were only two developmental stages, “childhood” and “adulthood”. These two stages had very distinct indicators. For a young male, when he reached the age of twelve, he was expected to become a man. When a young girl experienced her first menstrual period, they were then considered a woman, and her father started looking for a husband for her. Today, things are much different. As mentioned above, we have numerous stages that a person will go through on their journey to adulthood and beyond. The earlier stages like infant and toddler are pretty well defined, but exactly when a person becomes an adult, well, that is a little harder to define. The law in America says a person becomes an adult at the age of eighteen. Yet, there are many over that age that still act like children. As we will see in our next lesson, many factors effect this growth.

TEST
Lesson One

- (1) Name a few things that make people different.
- (2) In regards to God's creation, name two things that are unique to mankind only.
- (3) God created mankind for His.....?
- (4) True developmental growth requires that we grow in accordance to God's.....?
- (5) Understanding what, is the first step in understanding people?
- (6) The three larger categories of the human lifespan under which all the other smaller segments fall are.....?

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Lesson Two

As we continue our study into understanding people, we must also look at several other factors which influence a persons growth. During our last lesson, we talked about the spiritual aspect of a person at length, and now we will discuss external and internal factors... hereditary or environmental.

This discussion has been going on for ages and will most likely go on for much longer. Which is more influential in the growth and development of a person? Ultimately the answer is a matter of emphasis to some extent. Development is both an internal and external process. A person can have the best hereditary markers built into their DNA, but if put into a corrupt, harsh environment, may have a greater tendency towards a negative lifestyle. On the other hand, a person who was handed down a more negative hereditary line, may overcome that, if given a more positive environment in which to grown.

It has been noted that some children who grow up in rough neighborhoods, with very little guidance, and not much going for them at all, have grown up to be very productive, happy, and well adjusted adults. And, on the other hand, some children who have grown up with everything going for them, in a great family environment, and the whole world at their fingertips have grown up to be quit the opposite. When looking at these situations, one must conclude, that while heritage and environment plays some part in the development of a person, neither of them are deciding factors. In Scripture, God tells us to “not be conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2). This would seem to indicated that our environment does not dictate our outcome. However, we also learn from God’s Word that “I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Deut. 5:9). This speaks about generational curses. Some things are passed down from generation to generation. This does not mean a child must be controlled by the iniquities of their father, but that the tenancies are there to fall into the same sins the parents do. What we learn from all of this is that in trying to understand people, external and internal influences matter, but are not the deciding factor. The deciding factor in a persons development always comes down to their spiritual condition.

A final area of discussion, within the developmental perspective, revolves around how predictive the early influences are on the life of a growing individual. Do these influences provide a description of the child or a prescription of what they must become? Can the natural processes of development be interrupted or refocused? Of course, Scripture again gives us the answer to this. Proverbs 22:6 tells us to “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. Parents are the catalyst that God uses to guide the upcoming generation into the path He has designed. Sadly, because of sin, many parents fall short of training up their children. Other outside influences are allowed to teach them, and these influences can be negative or positive.

In conclusion, development is normal; It is God-given and is similar yet unique in each individual.

Much can be learned by keen observational skills, reading appropriate literature, and of course searching the Bible for insight. A persons internal and external influences, while effecting a persons development, is not the final story. Everything, in the end, boils down to godly, spiritual influences. Life span is divided into three major steps, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Each individual

experiences growth in biological, cognitive, socioemotional and spiritual ways. The more one understands how these different influences interact with the growth of an individual, the better they will be equipped to minister to them.

TEST
Lesson Two

(1) Name one internal and one external factor that can influence a persons growth.

(2) According to Romans 12:2, are we controlled by our environment?

(3) The deciding factor in a persons development always comes down to their.....?

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Lesson Three

As we turn our attention to our first specific age group, let us remind ourselves that regardless of the age of a person, there are two common points among all of them. First, they are sinners fallen from fellowship with God, and a spiritual rebirth is needed to restore that relationship. Where they are at spiritually will dictate where they are as a person. This is no different for our first group of people that we are going to look at..... the unborn baby.

Now your first instinct may be to reply, “but an unborn baby can’t be ministered to so it’s not that imperative that we understand them.” But, nothing could be further from the truth. An unborn child is a human being. God knows them, sanctifies them and ordains them even while in the womb (Jer. 1:5). If this is truly the case, then that living, breathing, baby human has eternal worth and we would do well to treat them as such. There is a lot that we can understand about them, even at this age.

First, regardless of what many would like you to believe, an unborn baby is alive. It is not just a “fetus” or “lump of cells”. It is, as mentioned above, a living breathing human. Scripture tells us that life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). From a medical point of view, just days after conception (11-17 days), the fertilized egg inside the mother starts receiving nutrients from the placenta. This placenta is the lifeline between the mother and newly formed baby. Because it brings nutrient rich blood from the mother to the baby. Now, given the fact that God knows that developing baby, even at this age...He calls them by name, and even knows what great things He has planned for them, and that life is in the blood, and there is blood flowing to that child... It would then be safe to say that they are alive. Another Bible verse that we should look at is in Mark 12:27. Here we read, “He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err”. If God is the God of the living, and He is the God of the unborn, then the unborn child is alive.

Secondly, an unborn child is learning from a very early age. From about the fourth week of development, a child’s nerves system is starting to develop and they are able to feel pain. By week nine, they start moving, and by week thirteen, they respond to sound outside the womb. It is at this point that ministering to an unborn baby should begin. It is important to understand that the way a child learns at this stage is through sensory inputs. Sounds and vibrations received into the womb has a great affect on an unborn child at this age. An unborn child can learn the sound of its mother and father while in the womb. They can feel the tone of the sounds whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. These early sensory lessons are what bonds the child to it’s mother and father. But there is so much more going on.

Thirdly, the unborn child becomes partakers of everything that the mother puts into her body...whether it be good or bad. It has been scientifically documented that a child will, many times, grow up liking certain foods that the mother craved while pregnant. Alcohol, smoking, drugs, and other such stimuli effect the unborn child, and can have a huge impact on their lives after birth as well. Even relationships with others during pregnancy can dramatically effect the unborn child and have an affect on the child throughout it’s life. An unsettled life will many times produce an unsettled baby. Fighting, arguing, screaming, hollering, loud noises, and other such stimuli can have great negative results on the unborn child. These sensory inputs manifest themselves many years after birth. A discerning Bible counselor, or Christian Minister will need to take all of this into account in order to properly minister to someone,

regardless of their age.

Another Biblical principle that comes into affect during this time of life is something called “Generational Curses”. The bases of this is found in Exodus 20:5 where we read, in part, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me”. A generational curse is believed to be passed down from one generation to another due to rebellion against God. If your family line is marked by divorce, incest, poverty, anger or other ungodly patterns, you're likely under a generational curse. The Bible says that these curses are tied to choices. We inherit many traits and preferences from our parents that aren't always a positive influence on ourselves or others. According to Exodus 20:5, these generation curses can extend into the fourth generation, but, if each consecutive generation continues the specific sin or sins that causes the curse, it will continue to manifest itself. The curse must be broken, and each consecutive generation after that must willfully reject that sin for it to be finally broken in that hereditary line. This principle can be see in a child who had an alcoholic father. They have a much greater tendency to become an alcoholic as well. If they reject that sin, the next generation of children will still have the alcoholic tendency, but will not be as strong...and so on. They they do not reject that sin, the alcoholic tendency will be even greater in their children. This Biblical principle can also be seen in children who were abused and grow up to be abusive themselves, as well as many other sins that causes generational curses. Many parents who are in prison and separated from their children, for various types of sins, are amazed to find that their children grew up with the same sinful tendencies as they had. These are not learned behaviors, but are in fact, generational curses. Other such generational curses can become physical such as birth defects from drug abuse, sexual perversions and other such transgressions. This can be seen in children born to mothers who are meth addicts. The mother, due to her meth addiction finds herself having issues with her teeth. Her child grows up with very bad teeth problems as a result of the addiction of the mother. Children born to adults who have sexual perversions have a greater tendency to have many of the same health issues their parents did due to the perversion. But, even the next generation after that still has a greater chance of having the same issues. These generational curses must be dealt with and taken into consideration when dealing with, and attempting to understand people. They play a huge role in how a person acts, things, and behaves. And, they find their roots in a persons life as early as the unborn stage of life.

Ministering to unborn children is very vital in that persons spiritual growth. However, most of the ministering to unborn children falls on the parents shoulders. Creating a peaceful, relaxing environment for the child's sensory perception is a must. Introducing Godly music, songs, and even speech is a great way to help develop the unborn child as well. Some mothers have been know to put headphones over their bellies and softly play children's christian songs to their child, as well as spending time rubbing their bellies and talking to their child. Having the father do the same thing regularly is also a great way to get the child off on the right foot. And, after they have been born and have grown up, knowing what types of sensory inputs the child was subjected to will give the Biblical counselor or Christian minister vital insight in understanding them and who they have become.

TEST
Lesson Three

- (1) Regardless of the age of a person, there are two common points among all of them. What are they?
- (2) According to Leviticus 17:11, what determines life?
- (3) Is an unborn baby alive?
- (4) Is abortion murder?
- (5) Can an unborn baby learn? And, if so, how?
- (6) What are some external factors that can affect an unborn baby, even after it is born?
- (7) In your own words, describe what a Generational Curse is, as defined in this lesson.

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Lesson Four

Let us now turn our attention to the newly born baby. The learning through “sensory” input that the unborn baby was accustomed to will continue for a short while after birth. But, very quickly, sensory learning starts to give way to a new type of learning.... That of “sensory motor learning”. At this stage, the new born baby starts to become very active. The move from sleeping twenty hours each day to having the ability to push themselves up, roll over, sit up, stand and walk. They are learning new taste, textures, colors, sounds, and even failure. They can discern facial expressions, subtle tones in voices, and start developing their own personalities.

It is at this age---new born through about one year of age--- that it is important to build upon the positive sensory learning that took place while still in the womb, or attempt to adjust inputs that may not have been so positive. The newborn child will attempt to connect those sensory inputs to something he can interact with. The pleasant tones of mother speaking now has a face. That deeper, calm, reassuring sound she heard when daddy spoke, now has strong hands to hold her. Or, that booming sound that scared her now has a male face and she does not feel comfortable around him. It is these early sensory inputs and motor learning experiences that may very well carry through into adult life. As a Biblical counselor, youth worker, Pastor, or other spiritual leader, understanding how these early years affect a person will go a long way in you being an effective minister.

For many, some of the first things that are learned in the spiritual realm happens in the nursery at Church. Many Pastors see the nursery as a necessary evil.... Never having enough people volunteering to work there, and taking up valuable space that could be used for something else. However, if they don't have a nursery, they will have half a dozen screaming babies that they have to preach over. However, the reality is that the nursery is a vital ministry within itself. Conducted right, the nursery worker has the opportunity to affect the child's life throughout every stage of growth. Having a loving, caring male and female worker at all times in a great place to start. The baby learns that they are safe around males and females, and learn to trust and interact with both. Workers that sing to them, rock them, feed them, get down on the floor and crawl with them, and sit in a rocker and read to them from the word of God are worth their weight in gold. Infants explore their world unceasingly. Because of this, it is important to have at least one adult worker in the nursery for every three children. This insures that each child is given plenty of attention and care.

It is at this point--- from new born forward---that another biblical truth comes into play. This is the Biblical truth of “Familiar spirits”. Leviticus 19:31 says, “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I [am] the LORD your God.” We can also read about familiar spirits in many other verses (Isiah 8:19, 19:3, Leviticus 20:6, 2 Kings 23:24 to name a few). A familiar spirit is a spirit or demon that serves or prompts an individual. They can be summoned or they can simply attach themselves to a person. Unlike “generation curses” that are genetic codes that are passed on from one generation to another, a “familiar spirit” comes into play after birth and becomes an issue in a person's life because of close contact to someone or something with the same spirit. Biblically speaking, there are many types of spirits. There are “lying” spirits, “anger” spirits, spirits of alcoholism, spirits of laziness, homosexual spirits, and many, many others. This is why it is very important to guard

these little ones and strive to fill them with things of God. Most of the time, familiar spirits are not even recognized in a person because most Pastors do not teach about them. However, to a discerning Christian worker, they can be spotted. A woman who is attracted to a seemingly perfect person, but in the end, they always end up abusive.... A man who has a drinking problem, and is always drawn to others who, without knowing it, also has a drinking problem. Or how about a child that seems to always attract kids involved in unsavory behaviors? All of these could be signs of “familiar spirits” in play. Familiar spirits draw people together who have the same spirit. It may not even be obvious at first, but to the discerning person, it will become obvious. Demonic spirits, Familiar Spirits, and other types of bad spirits like to go after young children because they are so open to the spirit realm. This is why it is so important to guard your child during these critical early years and fill them with things from above. Part of this will involve seeking out familiar spirits that may be in your own life, rebuking them, and getting rid of them so you don’t pass them on to your children.

In striving to understand people, what makes them the way they are, and how to better minister to them, all of these factors must be considered. What they were subjected to prior to birth, and what type of influences did they have in their life as a baby and young child. Are there generational curses at play, or are you dealing with some type of familiar spirit. The Christian worker will need wisdom and the spirit of discernment that comes only from God. Much prayer will also be needed. Remember, “...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12)

TEST
Lesson Four

- (1) The unborn child, and the newly born child learns primarily through what type of input?

- (2) The newly born baby, starts learning by what type of input shortly after birth?

- (3) What type of early sensory inputs effect a persons life even into adult hood?

- (4) Give the information given in the lesson, why is the Nursery so important?

- (5) What is a "Familiar Spirit"?

- (6) What are the factors given in this lesson that must be considered when attempting to understand a person?

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Lesson Five

Once a person reaches four or five years old, the rate of growth slows down and an increase in skill and gracefulness of movement is noticed. Learning to ride tricycles or bikes, climbing, swinging, playing catch and throwing balls are all standard accomplishments for young folks around this age. It is important to note that at around five, a child's brain has attained 90% of it's adult weight, while his body is only at around 30%. This discovery helps us to understand just how critical this time is to the thinking and learning process our creator has designed.

However, we must also remember that everything the child has received in their processing journey, while in the womb, and as a baby, is all still in there. Sensory inputs, generational curses, familiar spirits, and all the early motor learning skills are packed away in that large brain. But, we must remember that the child does not have the reasoning, emotional skills, or experience to accurately process all this information. For the first time in their lives, they are beginning to distinguish the difference between reality and fantasy. During their first two and three years of life, they could not think through cause and effect. They were living for today, because yesterday is gone, and tomorrow is not even a concept. But now, these types of reality are starting to come into focus.

While in the earlier years, sensory input was inputted into their tiny little brains, and that was simply the way life was. But now, they are starting to think through the world around them. How their care givers interact with them during this time of their life will greatly impact what type of an adult they will become. They are now just a year or so away from locking in how they will view the world for the rest of their lives. It is widely believed that by the time a child is six, they have already developed their life long character, how they will act and respond, and how they will process new information for the rest of their lives. This is why these early years are so important.

As in the previous age groups, one must take into account, past generational factors, parental factors, environmental factors, and spiritual factors in trying to understand a child in this age group of four and five years old. Because of their age, their attention span is not very long as of yet. A good rule of thumb when working with children is to estimate their attention span by giving them one minute for every year they are old. Thus a four or five year old child would not be able to focus on a task for more than five minutes. The previously mentioned factors can add to that time or subtract from it, depending upon how positive or negative those factors were on the child.

When ministering to a child of this age, one should refrain from making statements such as, "receiving Jesus into your heart", or "walking with Christ". They will probably respond with something along the lines of, "I don't want anyone living inside of me", or "how do I walk with someone I can't see".

Keeping things at a level they understand like, becoming part of God's family might work better. Remember also, that children at this age love to please adults and will most likely do about anything you ask, even if they don't mean it, understand it, or even like it. Resist the urge to "get a decision" for Christ from kids this age, but concentrate more on getting them familiar with who Jesus is, and what sin is. Memory is a challenge as well at this age, so don't expect them to learn bible verses very well.

Finally, four and five year olds are in the formative stage of constructing their self-image. It is at this

point that some generational curses can start to manifest. Getting to know what their grandparents and even great grandparents were like, and even who their parents are can go a long way in spotting generational curses. Keying in on these trouble spots in their self-image construction and guiding them into a more positive path can go a long way in helping them grow into godly young men and women.

As they start to bud socially, the type of friends they gravitate towards can be very telling as well. Talking to them, honestly answering their questions, praising and rewarding them for good behavior and decisions are all very good tools in steering their young minds down a positive path. This is the stage of first self-awareness, and truly stepping forward into a bold new world for a young child. They need adults in their life who take the time to understand them, the dangers that they face, and how to help them find the right path. This is what godly men and women are here for...to train them up in the way they should go.

TEST
Lesson Five

- (1) Name a few accomplishments that a child around the age of four might be expected to do.

- (2) Is it true that at the age of four and five, a child's brain still has a lot of growing to do?

- (3) Is it important for care givers to understand a child's genealogy?

- (4) When witnessing to a child of this age, should you use theological terms like “born again”?

- (5) Can generational curses start to appear at this age?

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Lesson Six

As a child approaches the age of six...and even into ages seven and eight... they enter what some like to refer to as the “boring years”. It would seem that not too much takes place during this time. However, the reality is, there is a lot that goes on. Children in this age group start going through a lot of changes. Baby teeth give way to adult teeth, hand-eye coordination, reaction times, physical body changes, and cognitive reasoning all go through major changes during this time of life. This is also the time that children become aware of how others see them. Not having the latest fashion of clothing, or hair design can cause much stress for a child during this time. Weight, inability to do certain sports, or just not having a new backpack can become major problems for them. Children in this age group, because of their increased mental ability are able to see and reason that they are different from other children, but they lack the maturity, experience, and cognitive reasoning to realize that these issues are not that important. This can become a two edged sword. If a child finds themselves on the negative end of these differences, they can become insecure, withdrawn, and even regress in their social, mental, and sometimes even physical growth. If a child finds themselves on the perceived positive side of these differences they can become proud, over confident, arrogant, and even bullish. In any event, a sensitive Christian worker will spot these issues and step in to help the child, regardless of which side they may be on, to properly work through how they are feeling and what they are perceiving.

For most kids during this time of life, they are striving for perfection. Some go as far as to call this stage of a child life as the “eraser age”. This is a great time to help a child erase certain things that have crept into their life and to replace it with more positive things. Generational curses such as anger issues, laziness, and pride, can start to appear. Familiar spirits can also become obvious. A child being drawn towards others that are known to be disobedient, or other that are involved in cultic behaviors or who dress in unorthodox manners may be signs of familiar spirits acting up. Understanding the roots of these issues can go a long way in being able to step in and correct them. It should be noted that not every negative behavior is a result of generational curses or familiar spirits. It could simply be a bad choice at the moment. But knowing these factors are there, and actively stepping in to confront them at these early ages can stop a child from a life of struggles...or worse.

Their newfound cognitive skills and social-emotional development lay the groundwork for the introduction of a new stage in faith development. Children in this age group work hard to differentiate real from make-believe, thus comes the transition from a mythic to a more literal faith. This new desire for reality comes linked with an insistence on demonstration or proof for claims of facts. When you make a statement such as, “God talks to me”, be prepared for a child in this age group to raise their hand and ask you for a specific example of when God talked to you. They are no longer satisfied with facts that the adult claims to be true. They want to see the proof. As a parent, or Christian worker, Pastor, or counselor, you had better make sure your “walk”, is consistent with your “talk”, because if it not, you are going to get called on it.

Teaching and learning times for this group are bound by their attention span of ten to fifteen minutes. The Christian teacher will build on their growing memory skills by engaging in Scripture memory. Use their newfound skills in writing, reading and speaking for independent study with their Bible and

workbook. Follow the rule of “impression must always be followed by expression” as you teach and interact with six, seven, and eight year old. You will find that this age group has endless questions about God and heaven which should be taken seriously. Seize their natural curiosity and encourage them to find answers for themselves in their own Bible. However, be ready to help steer them in the right direction because, as previously, mentioned, they do not have the cognitive maturity or experience to put all the dots together as of yet. Allowing them to just simply come to their own conclusion...right or wrong... Can do more harm in the future. Compliment them when they come to the right answers, and guide them when they come up with a wrong one. A child given the opportunity to find the right answers on their own, guided by an understanding Adult, will never forget what they have learned.

TEST
Lesson Six

- (1) The age group of six, seven and eight, is sometimes known as the (...) years.

- (2) What are some physical changes that take place during this time of a child's life?

- (3) Why would this age group be known as the "eraser age"?

- (4) As a parent, or Christian worker, Pastor, or counselor, you had better make sure your ".....", is consistent with your "talk".

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Lesson Seven

As we get to the Pr-Adolescence years (9,10,11), A whole new world starts opening up. The youth is reasoning even more logically about concrete events, and are mastering the art of thinking on their own. Their bodies become stronger and coordination increases greatly. For many children around the world, this is the stage where childhood ends, and adulthood starts. Adolescence does not even exist for many.

It is during this age in which an individual becomes capable of sexual reproduction. Physical changes to the body, hormonal increases within the body, new and unknown mental thoughts, and societal pressures and expectations can become overwhelming. In some cultures, as mentioned above, the time period between childhood and adulthood may only be a few months. Individuals are expected to marry and assume adult task shortly after they become biologically capable of reproduction. In other parts of the world, in more rural and agricultural areas, youth at this age are needed for their ability to accomplish manual labor, and to help out around the farm, or in family businesses.

With all of these changes going on, there is an even bigger change taking place. The preadolescent is also trying to find their own identity. As a result, there could be many surprises for the parent or youth worker. This can also cause issues between the adults and the youth as well. Understanding what is going on within the minds, hearts, and spirit of the preadolescent is vital. One of the biggest issues to arise is that the youth becomes less dependent on the adults in their lives, and starts seeking the approval of their peers. It is also at this age that most familiar spirits start to emerge. A wise youth worker, parent or guardian will carefully guide their social interactions and watch for changes in behavior, actions, and routines.

By this time, the youth has already established, from their upbringing, culture, and spiritual influences, who they are going to be as a person. The way they think, act, react, and learn is already pretty set within them. So, when subtle, or even aggressive changes are noted, it is something that needs to be investigated. Addressing generational curses, familiar spirits, and spiritual shortcomings is vital. Honest and concrete answers to the issues they face is vital, as well as adults in their lives that show them the paths to take, by the paths they take themselves. They can spot a fraud from a mile away and saying one thing and doing something else will only drive them further to their peers and away from the adults that can help guide them.

As always, it is important to remember that in understanding a person of any age, their spiritual condition is the most vital place to look. External factors such as culture, society, family, and other such influences play a part in understanding them, but their spiritual condition is the factor that influences all the others. Because the youth in this age group is much more capable of understanding abstract thoughts, concepts, and choices and consequences, this is a perfect time to help them grow deeper into their Biblical understanding. The preadolescent is capable of understanding salvation if it is explained in a concrete manner. As the child continues to grow, they will need continued nurturing, especially in the area of how to make specific application of a general principle. Understanding all of the above mentioned principles will go a long way in understanding the individual youth, and being able to help them grow into responsible, spiritual adults.

TEST
Lesson Seven

- (1) List three changes that take place in a youths body during the preadolescent years.

- (2) With all these changes taking place, there is an even bigger one that takes place. What is it?

- (3) A wise youth worker, parent or guardian will carefully guide their social interactions and watch for changes in...?

- (4) Can a child of this age group understand salvation?

- (5) As always, it is important to remember that in understanding a person of any age, their (?) condition is the most vital to take a look at.

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Lesson Eight

As we turn our attention now to the Early Adolescence years of 12 and 13, we could sum it all up in one word, “Independence”. During this time in their lives, their friends are the most important people in their lives. They want to go do their own things and they want their parents to “back off”. This is caused in part by all the changes that are going on in their lives. Physical changes, hormonal changes, mental changes, as well as seeing the world from a totally different light. These changes tend to send many kids into isolation as well. Not so much because they are ashamed or embarrassed about the changes, but more so because they don't understand the changes.

As previously mentioned in other lessons, the age that boys become men has on average declined four months in every decade over the last century or so. This means that the physical markers that indicated a boy was becoming a man was once around the age of 14. Today, those markers start appearing as early as 11 or twelve. In girls, these markers are occurring earlier and earlier as well, just not as fast. However, the cognitive reasoning in children is not developing any faster. With the advent of social media and the internet, information is absorbed quicker than ever before, but what to do with that information and how to use it is still unattainable for most during this age. This disparity between mind and body causes much confusion and conflict within the child.

Ministry to these young teens will have to include teaching them about the moral and spiritual implications of their new sexual capacity and how God intends for them to use His beautiful gift of sexuality. Helping them to process these changes and how to control urges that their body feels, but their minds are not capable of understanding is a must as well.

Around the age of eleven through fifteen, a young adolescence starts going through the onset of the “Formal Operational Stage” of cognitive development. This is the final stage of cognitive reasoning where the adult fully uses their abstract, idealistic and logical reasoning. When a person reaches this final stage, he or she is able for the first time to deal with abstractions...to reason, to understand, and to construct complex systems of thought, to formulate philosophies, to struggle with contradictions, to think about the future, and to appreciate the beauty of a metaphor. Sadly, some never reach this stage. Do not assume that everyone is thinking this way just because their age indicates that they should be.

One way to minister effectively to this age group is to allow them to ask their probing and difficult questions. Because they have not fully reached the final stage of cognitive reasoning mentioned above, their questions may seem like heresy or unbelief when in reality they are simply trying to process through their own thoughts. Allowing them to ask these questions, not giving them the answers, but guiding them into finding the correct answers themselves, and then to express that new found information is one of the best ways in helping them make this cognitive leap. As teens try their wings in these new ways of thinking, they can become very negative and critical of everyone and everything...but mostly of themselves. Communication and much prayer is the key to helping them through this transition.

TEST
Lesson Eight

- (1) What one word would sum up this period of growth?

- (2) Is it because the child is ashamed of all the changes that are going on, or because they don't understand it all, that sends many into isolation?

- (3) Has the age that boys and girls transition (visually) into young men and women stayed the same over the years? Explain your answer.

- (4) Does everyone transition into the "Formal Operational Stage" at the same time? Explain

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Lesson Nine

Now, we will move to the next stage of growth. In this stage, we will look at a much larger span of time because the changes during this period of time are much slower and less pronounced. This is the middle to late adolescent years of 14-22. This time period can be summed up with one word... Stability.

Growth slows down and the body becomes more coordinated and the young adult grows into their body. Childhood diseases are a distant memory, and more “adult” features take hold. It is during this period of time that the child becomes a young adult.

Now, you have heard me say several times, everything rises and falls on the spiritual condition of the person. Up to this point, Generational curses, Familiar spirits, cultural influences, as well as environmental influences and peer pressures have all had a part in shaping the young adult. But, with any luck, so has godly influences such as sound Biblical teaching and role models, as well as strong parental love, training and examples. I say this because at this point in the young persons life, all of these influences will come to bear...ether for the good or the bad. The middle to late adolescent starts to face many battles during this time like substance abuse, sexual temptations, and other such things that can destroy or hinder ones path that God has planned. During this time, the young adult starts to reason at the highest level they probably ever will. However, they do not have the life experiences to make sound decisions. They feel that they can conceive life in a better way than the adults who have gone on before. I liken it to re-inventing the wheel. Every generation feels that they must make their mark in life...not by carrying on the sound, proven paths of their parents, but by re-inventing things with their own mark on it. It's a great plan, but after some point, the wheel becomes square again. If the young person has had spiritual, sound, mature role models, they will recognize their limited experiences and seek sound advice.

Another area that is formalizing during this time is that of finding their identity. The first step is either foreclosure or diffusion. Foreclosure is a status where parental values and childhood identifications are not reconsidered but simply accepted. Diffusion occurs when the adolescents have few commitments to goals or values (whether of their parents, peers or surrounding society) in which they find themselves.

The diffused teen cannot handle the common demands of adolescence. Fortunately, many move to a moratorium or official “time-out” where several different identities are tried on before one is finally selected. Sometimes this self identity may take ten years or more, stretching into their young adult life.

In these cases, the young persons identity does not determine their vocation, relationships, cultural perspectives or even personal interest, but these things determine the persons Identity. Nearly a fourth of all youth in this age group engage in three to four of the following activities as a result of not properly forming their identity: Substance abuse, delinquency, unprotected sex, adolescent pregnancy and school related problems. Understanding these pitfalls will help the responsible adult or youth worker steer the young person into a self-aware, biblical based, view of themselves, and thus help them to properly establish their self identity.

As the young person enters the last portion of this age group, they enter the peak of their life from a physical viewpoint. The ability to do hard physical work has reached it's zenith. Athletic ability is also at its lifetime peak. As well, they are more responsive to sexual stimuli. With increased sexual activity

comes the increased possibility of conception. This heightened sexual ability also carries an increased responsibility to use this beautiful gift within its God-given boundaries. The commands of Scripture to remain pure for the one you marry are as true today as the day God created man and woman and instead of being side-stepped, these important truths should be taught, and exulted...especially during this time of the young person's life. While societal standards on marriage have degenerated worldwide, God's idea remains steadfast. Helping young adults seek one partner for life with whom to enjoy sexual expression, bear and rear children, and with whom to experience life-long intimacy, honors God. When middle to late adolescents' identity formation is successful, marriage will more likely prove successful. Those who minister to this age level would model meaningful marriage relationships. Observing the life of a loving middle-adult couple communicates loudly.

TEST
Lesson Nine

- (1) What one word sums up this age group?

- (2) Everything rises and falls on....?

- (3) What are some influences that will come to bear on the young adults life during this time period?

- (4) During this time, the young adult starts to reason at the highest level they probably ever will.
However, they do not have the (.....) to make good decisions.

- (5) Should a persons self identity be influenced by their relationships, jobs, and interest, or should their self identity influence these things?

- (6) Name some pitfalls that a middle to late adolescent might fall into if their identity is not properly formed.

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Lesson Ten

Early adult hood, from around the age of 22 through about 40, is marked by a general slowing down period. For years, this age period was perceived to be almost stagnant, with very little changes at all taking place. However, this is not the case at all. Adults in this age period are in a transition period, moving from the carefree younger years, to the more productive, work filled, family and career oriented life. Work dominates most adults during this time, followed by family and independence, with the family ranking lower in this age level then in any other time. The entry ages for this age group is not very defined however because many will prolong the adolescence years through college and other graduate training schools. Many will find themselves in their early 30's before every truly entering their early adult years.

Physically, this is a delightful time as the body reaches it's peak performance. This era is marked by few if any chronic health problems, however, for the first time the consequences of poor eating and hygiene habits can be observed. Depending upon the persons habits, and life choices going through their earlier years, signs of aging can start to develop towards the middle to end of this age period. This is also the age period when spiritual decisions will really start to come to bear. By now, generational curses will have raised their ugly head and will have become problems. Whether it be drug abuse, sexual sins, anger issues, or a maraud of other problems, if curses were passed down from generation to generation, they will no doubt be evident. Divorces, crime, rejection of spiritual paths, as well as health, law, and societal problems will start to take their toll. As the adolescent years were the prime years for bringing a person into a spiritual relationship with Christ, so these early adult years can be marked as some of the hardest years to do so. Dealing with careers and family, struggling with poor decisions due to cultural, societal, and peer influences, as well as struggling with generational curses and familiar spirits can overwhelm a person physically and spiritually. If Christian leaders, parents, and other spiritual leaders have not successfully planted and watered godly spiritual seeds into the young adults life, the road ahead, for many, may prove fatal. However, if you are percipient, and understand the battles that are being fought, it is possible to win many of these young adults to the Lord. Understanding the lessons taught in this series, and understanding at all times that it is a spiritual battle that is being fought will go a long ways in making this happen.

It has been said that “the greater the battle, the greater the victory”, and this is just as true in personal lives. Although this age group has some of the toughest battles, the victories won on the spiritual front can be just as great. The spiritual work accomplished at this stage is so important that regardless of what decisions are made, the remainder of one's life will significantly be impacted. This is the stage at which the adult will make up their minds regarding what they will believe and how they will ultimately conduct their life...both on a physical level and on a spiritual level. In fact, most young adults who had previously made decisions for Christ at a younger age, will recommit to that decision again during this age period. This may take the form of a “re-commitment” or as a “re-dedication” or possibly as “making another profession of faith”. This does not mean that they were not just as serious at a younger age, but simply that at this point, their understanding and acceptance of the Gospel has come to a much deeper relationship. By this time, hopefully, they will have arrived at a much more personal faith...One that will guide them through the next, more turbulent years.

TEST
Lesson Ten

- (1) Adults in this age period are in a?

- (2) This era is marked by few if any.....?

- (3) What are some types of generational curses that may appear during this age period?

- (4) The greater the battle, the greater the?

- (5) What are some things that can overwhelm a person during this time?

- (6) Although, on a physical level, a young adult may be the strongest they ever will be, on a spiritual level, this period of time can be one of the most dangerous of their lives.

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Lesson Eleven

The “middle Adult” years, from around age 40 through 65, are probably the most stable of all the different age groups. Gone are most of the insecurities of youth, struggles of “making your mark”, starting families, and climbing the ladder of success. By this point, most people have reached their goals, if they had any, and those who haven't, probably never will. These are the ages when many will find themselves almost bored. As a result, many men, and some women, fall into the so called “midlife crises. Having affairs, taking risk, trying to regain some of their former youthful glory, are some of the traps they fall into. There are many psychological implications that could be discussed here, but ultimately, as always, it falls back onto the spiritual condition of the person involved. Are they walking with the Lord? Are they grounded in Biblical principles? Are they walking their spiritual professions?

It also goes back to how well each of the issues that we have discussed prior have been dealt with.

Generational curses... have they been identified, confessed, rebuked, and repented of? Cultural, societal, and peer influences... Have they been looked at and addressed from a Biblical point of view?

Familiar spirits... If present, have they been called out and rebuked in the name of Jesus Christ?

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit.... Has the individual been challenged to make a decision for Christ? If each of these life issues have been dealt with properly, then these middle to late adult years can be the best years of a persons life. If not, they can be miserable years, marked by one failure after another.

This is also the time of life when unanswered questions of pain, evil, and disease all push the middle adult to discover more meaningful answers to stubborn nagging questions. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do we have to suffer? Why does God not put an end to all the wickedness? These and other questions need an answer. Where they look for these answers will be based largely upon the outcome of the things discussed in the first paragraph. Now, more then ever, when so many other aspects of ones life is experiencing stability, the middle adult's faith is either on the verge of significant growth or prolonged stagnation. The Christian worker has a gold mine of opportunities to really make a spiritual difference in ones life, IF, they are willing to take the time needed to work with them. It is during this relatively calm and peaceful time that we can find the fertile soil in which previously postponed and unresolved conflicts can be given a second look. This is also a very good time to preach and teach on the balanced life that includes time for recreation and rest. These lessons will help the middle adult maintain biblical priorities in their life.

As the middle adult starts to close in on the later part of this time period. Health issues, financial pressures, facing the final years of ones life, and other major concerns start to take over. Spiritual matters will become either the key factor in ones life, or will be pushed aside all-to-gather. As a Christian leader, or spiritual friend, our concerns must be on those that fall away, as well as those who stay faithful. Helping them stay focused, tie up loos ends spiritually, and stay balanced is the key factor as they approach the Senior years.

TEST
Lesson Eleven

- (1) What are some pitfalls that a bored middle age person might fall into?

- (2) What are some concerns a person might face as they approach the latter years in this age group?

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Lesson Twelve

As we now take a look at the last age group...that of the Senior adult (ages 65+), the word to remember is "caution". Not every older adult is senile, forgetful and physically feeble. They have lived longer than most, have seen almost everything, and they don't like to mix their words. They will tell you exactly what they think, and if you try to act like something you're not, they will call you on it. Many in this age group are sharp intellectually, socially active and physically strong. Older adults now comprise the fastest growing segment of North America population. While the rest of the world, especially South America, Africa and Asia find nearly half to two-thirds of their population under age twenty, America is experiencing a significant graying of its population. In fact, the average life expectancy in the United States is now 80 years old for Women, and 73 for men. This is up almost 30 years from what was expected back in the 1900's.

Although much could be said about the abundance of health issues that plague the senior adult, it is enough to remember that when dealing with senior adults, these numerous health issues must be taken into account. Eye sight, hearing issues, memory loss, and even maneuverability need to be considered when ministering to them. The key to satisfaction and a sense of well being for older adults is the more active and involved they are, the more satisfied they are, and the more likely they will stay healthy, go to church, attend meetings and take trips. Do you want to witness to an older adult? Get involved in their life. Do you want to make a difference for a Senior? Spend time with them. They may not remember the bible verse you shared with them, but if you spend time with them...spend time helping them with their hobbies, and go out of your way to give them a hand, you can bet they will be happy to listen to you share that verse again.

This is also the time of life when looking back and evaluating one's life journey becomes important. If you have the patience, sitting and listening to their stories will help you gain a treasure trove of information. Helping them remember and put into perspective spiritual points of interest along their life's road map can pave the way to even greater spiritual journeys during these latter years. Recounting spiritual highs, seeing how God brought them through spiritual lows, and reminding them that God has promised to never leave them or forsake them, will go a long way in restoring or strengthening their faith.

Sadly, by this time of life, if they have not made a commitment to Christ, they probably never will. Years of rejecting the convicting of the Holy Spirit has left their hearts cold and hard. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is a very real possibility at this stage of life. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is a phrase that has been greatly misunderstood over the years. The word "blaspheming" simply means to "speak or treat wrongly". In regards to the Holy Spirit it means "to reject or ignore". So, in other words, Blaspheming the Holy Spirit simply means to reject or ignore the Holy Spirit's conviction in your life. God's Word tells us that "all sins and blasphemes shall be forgiven, but whosoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven" (Matthew 12 and Mark 3). This does not mean to give up and don't try. We never truly know what takes place in a person's heart, and, Lord willing, God is still working. You never know when that Bible verse, or that comforting word might be just what they need.

Hope is the message that older adults need to hear. Hope built on a solid foundation. Hope that is

stronger than they are. Hope that will bring them through the uncertain days ahead. Hope is what will keep them faithful.... go with them that final step....and see them safely through the dark vale of death. You can bring that hope to them. The hope that is rooted in Christ. You can be there for them, and the better you understand people, the better you will be at sharing that hope.

TEST
Lesson Twelve

- (1) What is the message that Seniors need to hear?

- (2) What is a very real possibility for someone in this age group?

- (3) What does "blaspheming the Holy Spirit" mean?