



Youth—The Vocal Majority¹

Ted Ward

Alcohol, drugs, sex, disorder, hostility, and long hair. What has happened to the flower of America's youth? The moral catastrophe of today is the decay that spells the doom of a once-great God-fearing nation.

Try it another way: Where have we failed? Our schools, our families, even our churches—everything must be re-examined in order to affix the blame. Somewhere—perhaps everywhere—we have failed.

Or still another approach: *Young People*. They comprise a distinct majority in our population; the ratio of younger to older is higher than ever before, and the distinctions are sharper.

Young People:

- Most of them are in school.
- 40% of those 18 to 22 years of age are in college.
- Many of them are revolutionary or pre-revolutionary.
- They are causing real trouble in our nation.
- They constitute a challenge to stagger the thoughtful.

There may be other ways to get started on this topic, but from time to eternity, and from the *New York Times* to the *Sunday School Times*, these are the approaches you see. I'm not much for panic and despair, and even less inclined to accept the recrimination line; so I'm left with only one approach that seems to make any sense: *Young People*. There are a whole lot of them (five of them belong to my wife and me). They've got some pretty serious needs that we want to try to meet in time. Many are anarchists and revolutionaries, but I think they are one of the most exciting challenges ever to confront a society. The church of Jesus Christ is in a good position to meet these challenges and identify itself once again as a revolutionary force in the world.

Let's get off the despair and woe kick, long enough to take a long, hard look. Let's make it an optimistic look. We just might be able to help some young people—and to learn something ourselves in the process.

Although there is danger in artificially grafting ourselves into the youth culture (the kids call that phony), we ought to test ourselves against their values. When we look at what they are screaming about, we can see certain things that we, too, need to take a stand on. Rather than plugging into categorical condemnations, we ought to help youth objectively evaluate themselves and their philosophies—against a standard of basic Scriptural truth and historic Christian perspective—not just against our own private views of what we'd like our own little church to be.

For example, why shouldn't we join our young people in the outcry for reform in social and political institutions? The powers that be are ordained of God, sure enough. So that means we should

¹ National Sunday School Association Seminar, Cincinnati, Ohio 1969

sit on our well-padded seats with folded hands? Is the church to have no social conscience? The men who turned the world upside down in the 1st century after Christ didn't beg off so easily. They suffered and died for defying a corrupt society and the powers that maintained it. Have Christians lost their right to a social conscience? Have we so lightly paid our debt to the heritage of Reformation and Puritan outcries? Today's youth is screaming, and if we don't scream with them, their hoarse voices will ultimately go silent and the glaring white rush of silence will chill us to the bone. *Silence* in the streets, not violence in the streets, marks the end of a civilization. What's wrong with wanting equal treatment and rights? Don't we, in Christian conscience, want police forces and courts that are concerned for the human worth and dignity of every man? Is recrimination and retribution more Christian? What's wrong with wanting churches that show compassion and love for all the men and women the Son of God died for?

Sometimes we seem to think in lazy circles: "Assume X is more important than Y," we begin. "Assume that you can't afford both X and Y," we wander on. "Which will you choose?" we ask as if entranced. The obvious (and, pathetically, wrong) answer comes droning back, "We will choose X, of course." Assume that you can't afford the effort to be concerned about the salvation of souls and meeting the human needs of men—which will you choose to engage in? *You shouldn't feel obligated to answer such a lazy question.* To do so is to fall again into the very trap set for the church fifty years ago from which we are just beginning to stagger free. The assumptions are all wrong! Don't *try* to answer questions based on such obvious oversights. The riches of heaven itself are invested in the church. Don't for one moment accept the assumption that we can't afford to be concerned about people as human individuals. We err if we are too busy counting them up as bodies—pardon me, as souls—that we must win for God. Youth today are quick to spot cynical and insincere behavior. I deal with young Christians who think that being interested in a man only because he is a "soul to win" is profoundly insincere. It doesn't help much to argue that there is nothing more important than the salvation of his soul. Christian young people today see through this dodge. They are right when they point up the sample behaviors of Jesus and the Apostles in the Gospels and in Acts. A man came to Jesus, the man had a *name*; where a man *lived* was important to Jesus. Often what a man thought that he needed was physical, and when he came to Jesus he wasn't turned off. Physical *and* spiritual needs were met. How unfortunate it is that we've been trapped by the "social Gospel panic" into a position that spiritual needs are all we can afford to relate to. How small our view of God's mercy has become!



Why shouldn't we rally behind youth when they cry out for consistency? Is living a "nice" sham somehow better, easier for a Christian to tolerate in a non-believer than seeing him live frankly and openly as an unregenerate sinner? Could it be that fear of exposure lies behind much of the enforcing of "niceness" in our culture? Kids today are saying loud and clear, "What you are is more important than what you say you are." Amen. But they go further and then it really begins to pinch, "What you say you are is *dishonest* when you exaggerate your claim." Would that we could all say, "Amen" to this one.

The transforming power of Jesus Christ is, in a way, rather embarrassing. We want to claim and live in the fact of this transforming, yet we know full well that there are some gaps and slips. When we want to "tell it right" in order to give God the glory, we describe ourselves as Christians and emphasize what Christ has done for us . . . and we easily fall into a trap of exaggeration. For some reason, it's hard today to admit—with Paul—that the "old nature" stills hangs in there, cropping up in the most exasperating ways. I've discovered that my college students like to hear me admit that I have trouble with the old sinful nature. It encourages them—not to relax their convictions, but to better understand and accept their own problems as being a normal aspect of living for Christ. My students

call that sort of talk “honesty.” What this is, to me, is less a matter of honesty than a matter of openness—of frankness that tells them I’m not entitled to any halo.

Consider still another of the major platforms of youthful protest: Why shouldn’t we join our youth in an outcry against excesses and abuses of power? Even law and order is a hollow god when it serves only its own ends. The fact that Jesus and Paul, particularly, aren’t recorded as having spoken out against the power excesses of the Roman Empire is a mystery to today’s youth. Perhaps as no other group before, American youth today has seen, and sensitively reacted to, the danger of raw power. Previously in history, power displays had to hit you and hurt you before you became aware of their danger. How else can you explain the complacency of German citizenry in the late 1930’s? Thanks to television, power displays can be observed closely, hitting and hurting others that you can identify with—it’s now possible to learn in advance. The vicious displays from Chicago were a turning point. Yet the change was mostly among the youth of America. The older generation was looking on and could say, “It serves them right.” The youthful watcher was saying something very different: “That could be me—I feel the way they feel about this and they don’t deserve that sort of treatment.” Even for Christian young people, the policeman is now a potential terrorist. Perhaps the voice of mature Christianity was buried that week . . . buried under a cloak of “righteous indignation” about “Communists behind it all.”

I reveal my viewpoint to you in an effort to honestly and frankly warn you that there are many things in this presentation that will seem unorthodox, at best. You should be on guard. I intend to challenge you and to show you that you can’t have it both ways. Either you wake up to youth, or you walk off from youth. Whether or not you agree with what youth are saying is not the important issue. What is important, if you intend to help them and to teach them, is that you try to understand and accept that what they are saying and doing is, in part, based on some justifiable complaints and anxieties. Educators (or, if you please, church educators) who turn youth off does not have much future. They are already retired, whether they know it or not. I’m not even very optimistic about re-training them. We’re entering an age when apparently only the youthful can reach the youth. Fortunately, youthfulness is also a state of mind—or most of us may as well head home!

I want to challenge you. I was told that I was free to try, but I’m not sure that I have any useful answers.

In the land of India where problems seem, in some ways, to be even less likely to be solved than in our own country, I learned a bit of philosophy. I suppose this is a part of the mystique of the “inscrutable East.” The Indians have a saying, “When you say you understand our problems yet you attempt to propose solutions, this is sufficient proof that you don’t understand our problems.” Today’s topic seems to be uncomfortably covered by this warning. Those who claim to understand the dilemma may merely be proving their ignorance.

This presentation cannot be both comprehensive and comprehensible. To be exhaustive, it would also be exhausting. I’m not going to try to mislead you into thinking I know enough about the topic to be *that* thorough, anyway. As I’ve moved along in my thinking about this exciting topic—youth and what us threatened old-timers ought to do to help out—I’ve been struck by the observation that this “Vocal Majority” we’re talking about really isn’t so vocal after all.

Indeed, one of the most difficult problems in dealing with the youth culture is knowing who or what speaks for youth. Clearly, it is inadequate to think of “youth” as being all of one piece. No one voice could honestly speak for all. The radicals are a minority (these are commonly called “revolutionaries”) but their voice is less Marxist/Leninist than it is old-fashioned anarchist. The other small fringe group is the counter-revolutionaries—those caught up in the eye-for-an-eye doctrine of answering violence with violence. There isn’t any reason to believe that this group is very large.

A much larger group is the pre-revolutionary set not yet committed to taking any particular action, but carefully watching for signs of inconsistency; more inclined to take up for the underdog,

especially when there is any trace of injustice. These are the ready-to-be-committed youth who could so wonderfully get turned on for Christ.

The uncommitted youth still seem to form the largest group. I believe you would find most of your church-going young people in this group. For one reason or another, they are standing back—perhaps believing that they can avoid getting their hands dirty or bloody. Lately, I've seen some shifts mainly over the issue of the war. They've been able to keep their peace over the issues of racial justice, the social relevancy of the church, and the use of raw power in "keeping the peace;" but Viet Nam is getting to be hard to keep in repose of digestion. If something doesn't break soon in our nation's stance in Southeast Asia, we're going to see some of these passive kids in this largest group tromp noisily into the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary camps.



Youth today, even if categorized into these four degrees and stances of militancy, are hard to describe. Thorough surveys are apparently impossible. Nobody even seems to know the parameters for a good survey. We can look at a national sample and wish we had taken regional samples; look at regional samples and wish we had looked at some detailed breakdowns; look intensively at one little group and find perplexing contradictions and no clear pattern. As behavioral scientists, we are left

to gross inferences and considerable guesswork.

Because scientific investigation of the youth culture has been so complicated by the rapidly evolving events of our times, even scholars have resorted to the simpler tactics of rhetoric and logical analysis. This helps us, at least, to see that the "generation gap" is a function of communication breakdowns rather than of any deliberate or willful acts on either side of the so-called "gap."

That the "gap" is easier to identify across the generations is not surprising. It has always been so. Whenever schisms in a society emerge, the love/hate relationship of parent and child always emerges as a highly visible symptom. In today's case, these conflicts of the older versus the younger are only symptoms. The real causes lie deeper; they are visible only to the most compassionate eye. Obsession with the symptoms blinds the soul. To see the beard, to resent the vulgarity, to defend oneself against apparent attack—these command the mind's eye and chill the heart. Mature people force themselves to stay calm and look deeper.

The eminent sociologist and lawyer, David Riesman, fears that the idealism of today's youth is too abstract and too fragile—that protest will deteriorate into a sort of "romantic withdrawal . . ." In the current issue of *Psychology Today* he comments,

Anyone who has recently had a lot of experience with students must regard the notion of 'student organizations' as a contradiction in terms. Some anarchic non-organizational organizations, including the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), have minority factions within minority factions. Many protests are more like a traffic jam than anything else.²

Riesman notes that even in the achievement of their first objectives, young people seem often not to know what to do with their gains.

Many students are simply not accepting responsibility in traditional representative terms. The formal student government is everywhere on the decline, and students are apt to say that no one else—not even their best friends or roommates—can speak for them. In many institutions there has been a very serious effort to try to bring student representatives into curriculum committees and other centers of decision, and it often turns out that the students are too anarchic, mutually suspicious, or simply too modest

² David Riesman. The Young Are Captives of Each Other: A Conversation with David Riesman and T. George Harris. *Psychology Today*, October 1969, pp. 28-31, 64-67.

to accept a representative position; and in many cases, only a few turn out to work on such committees.³

The adult society is powerful enough merely to ignore, contain, and wait-out the upsurge of youthful activism. There is a profound danger that such a cynical consequence may develop and lead ultimately to sullen withdrawal, communication isolation, and unwillingness to accept responsibility. This is the sort of hollow orderliness that frightens me.

Riesman also writes,

Even where students have obtained the power to control their own lives and their own education, they find it difficult to create the structures that would sustain an on-going co-operative and . . . self-directed educational process.⁴

We should do all that we can to keep communication lines open between young and old towards the day when we all might become more sane.

Youth think we old-timers take the wrong things too seriously. In part, that's what the shaggy hair and beards are trying to show us. We knock their music, their dress, and their grooming. They seem to be sorting us out; finding out who they can antagonize with these superficial factors, as if to say, "If I mean so little to you that you will attack me for these silly things, I want to know it now." It seems like weird logic to us, but then that's how we know we're over the hill. Maybe there is one sober truth at the bottom of it all: In an age of anxiety when we daily confront incredible international problems, national problems, racial problems, urban problems, and it seems, inter-personal problems beyond our power to cope, this persistent sense of powerlessness distorts our sense of proportion. We tend to exaggerate little irritations; we let minor issues become our major issues; we attack only little problems because we've grown weary of dealing with the important, but impossible, problems. Our young people get caught in this pinch. They give us so many of our little problems that we develop the habit of working out our frustrations on them. The tone and stance of the news media illustrate that it isn't only parents who fall into this trap. As a whole society, we are majoring in minors. (The pun is intended.)

Several of the basic contentions of modern education are apparently perplexing and held to be suspect in evangelical circles. One of the basic propositions is that every student has worth and unrevealed potentialities. This assumption leads to important consequences in practice. For one thing, learners are encouraged to set goals for themselves; for another, good teachers tend not to limit their expectations for a learner to only what they can see at the first. Try as you will, it isn't easy to reject this assumption on theological grounds. The New Testament shows several significant cases where God recognized lowly fishermen, low-principled publicans, and aggressive sword-swingers as having potentialities far beyond what anybody had seen. The idea that there is value and worth in every individual need not be rejected on the grounds of depravity of the soul. Christian youth today want to talk about, to better understand, and to know that we—their elders—have also noticed this fact.

Contemporary thought in education sees learning as behavior change. The major consequence of this proposition is a rejection of any doctrinaire teaching that seeks lip-service alone. What a person knows—truly knows—is measured in terms of the difference it makes in the daily decision-making of his life. There is, of course, a highly pragmatic overtone here: What has been truly learned is what the individual can put to work in daily life. Pragmatism or not, this behavioral definition of learning helps to put the emphasis on dynamic application of information. Sterile acquiescence, or nodding, and shallow acceptance cannot rightly be called learning. Does this view threaten the church? We should devoutly hope not. The Gospel's power is reflected in its capacity to change hearts (inner processes)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

so that what flows from the inner motivations will be observably different. With all our emphasis on what Christ can do for the inner life, let's not minimize the Scriptural contention that "humans look on the outward appearances." Youth insist that these outward appearances should be consistent with what people claim to be in their hearts. We can be refreshed and encouraged by this view.

In the field of human learning, we try to make careful distinctions between indoctrination and education. If you call it "Christian Education," but use tactics of indoctrination or conditioning, you are deceiving yourself.

Christian Education is paying quite a price today for the years of indoctrination. Emphasis on rote memory tasks, conformity of behavior to unaccepted values, and perpetuation of unchallenged dogmas has long been basic. Although there is only the weakest sort of defense for these three tactics, they are persistent. Especially since the older generation of church leaders are largely the survivors of an indoctrination system, their stance of acceptance of its tactics is predictable: It is certainly more easy and natural for the old-timers than would be a stance of challenge and change. True, there are notable persons who want to see changes to a more powerful system of Christian Education. Many of those exceptional persons are here—that's what a conference of this sort is all about. But make no mistake; change is coming about too slowly. A generation of children and young people, whose formal education has been superior in many respects, is now upon us. For thousands of church-going American youth, the Sunday school hour is a weekly visit to another era—often a more crude, more dusty, and more deadening experience by contrast than it was twenty years ago. Changing it by updating methods, improving the teaching, and refining the materials is a grand idea; but even this admirable aim is getting threadbare with age. Updating of methods, materials, and teaching alone simply won't work.

The problem lies deeper and concerns more sensitive issues. Are we ready to confront the differences between education and indoctrination? Today's youth are apparently inclined to indoctrinate each other, but they are highly resistant to indoctrination from any other segments of society (except through the mass media.) When adults relate to youth, the framework and tactics are to *educate*; when youth relates to youth, they are often inclined to use *indoctrination* tactics. I'm not sure why youth are willing to make this exception with each other unless it relates to the self-preservation syndrome: Any group that seeks to preserve itself against external threats tolerates deviances *within* the group that it cannot accept from outside.

In simpler terms, the issue is whether or not Christianity can be taught as a process of education. Must faith be approached as a task of indoctrination? In general, indoctrination is a process of imposing an informational knowledge without encouraging an objective and rational examination or use of the knowledge. Indoctrination is an accepted procedure where a massive group must be rapidly marshaled into uniformity. Indoctrination seems appropriate then to those who practice "crisis Christianity." To others whose Christian experience is able to stand the tests of rational examination and evaluation, a process of education seems more appropriate. The crucial difference is the willingness to allow learners to make their own decisions about acceptance or rejection. The tactical differences concern the three elements stated earlier: the nature of memory, conformity of behavior, and the challenging of dogma.

From our rich heritage of doctrine and dogma, from the long centuries of creeds and catechisms, it is not easy to break smoothly into an era of objectivity. The struggle is decades old. The crucial hour of birth or death seems now at hand.

One important hangover from the age of dogma and indoctrination is the insistence that every question has an answer. But that over-simplifies it. More fully explained, this "tradition of closure" makes a distinction between worthy and unworthy questions. The distinction rests on the practice of legitimizing and honoring questions for which we have the answer. So the tradition of closure advocates a form of teaching by posing questions. The catch is that only those questions for which

there are precise and dogmatic answers are allowed. Catechisms are the primary relic of the tradition of closure—and in their defense of the historical role. But if you still are living in the tradition of closure, please use a really *good* catechism—don't invent your own and call it “discussion questions.”

It isn't enough that the so-called discussion questions that follow a lesson are worded in a “What do you think?” form. It's depressing to observe that so very many such questions don't really value what I think; instead they are slyly worded to get a person to say that I think what the author thinks. Putting words in people's mouths causes gagging, and ultimately results in nausea.

We would likely agree that there are several profoundly important questions for which the Word of God gives completely flat answers, particularly in the realm of soteriology. This is probably why we find it easy to act as if God has spoken unequivocally on all matters and issues. Those of us who find the Bible to be a comprehensive source of guidance need to be reminded over and over again that not every Christian sees things exactly alike. God uses Scripture to speak to us, for sure, but God speaks in terms of our own limited understanding and particular needs. Christian young people today are shaken, sometimes completely turned off, by bickering about whether God has or hasn't said this or that. In some ways, Christianity might appear to be stronger if we all were, in fact, white, middle-class, conservative, republicans, and, of course, Americans. Sometimes I think youth is the only period of life when you can be detached enough from what you are *becoming* to recognize what aspects of your self and your personality are truly a reflection of Christ, and what parts are a reflection of what *you* want to believe. Long live youthful idealism!

A promising alternative to the tradition of closure is the growing tradition of the open-ended question. A truly open-ended question indicates awareness of the importance of the question, value of the search for understanding, and respect for the potential insight of the respondents. Many young people today take thoughtful interest in open-ended questions. They have no quarrel with the contention that our society must face up to some really tough issues. Their only quarrel is with the proposition that there is only one answer for a given question. Their disillusionment is not really spiritual; it's in the realm of politics and social ideals where they've been burned. Those under thirty today have never seen a political, economic, or social proposition achieve its promises. Only in the scientific and technological realm have promises been achieved. It's no wonder that people are becoming more materialistic. Outside the spiritual realm, that's the only aspect of life where they've seen any pay-off.

Looking at the question of how to teach young people of this era, Economics Professor, George Katona, of the University of Michigan recently made this observation:

There may have been a time when professors and experts knew the answers. During the last 20-odd years more research has been carried out in the physical, medical, and social sciences than in previous centuries. A major outcome of all these studies may be summarized in the following statement: Knowledge is changing; what was thought to be true yesterday represents at best a limiting case today, valid under certain circumstances only; new research uncovered new problems to which only preliminary, tentative, and probabilistic answers could be given. Therefore, and also because of the prevailing information overload, it is no longer possible to teach that this is how it is. The teacher cannot say, ‘Learn this by heart, then you will be an expert.’ What is necessary today—for future scholars and future teachers, and even for those who wish to learn how to read newspaper articles on trips to planets or on inflation—is to partake of the process of discovery.⁵

⁵ George Katona. Response to the President's Letter. *Memo to the Faculty*, Ann Arbor: Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, #36, August 1969, p. 6.

Can you hear Katona's conclusion? "What is necessary today is to partake of the process of discovery." Even for Christian education where the content is, in part, the "old truth," the relevancies and values of that "old truth" must be discovered or at least re-discovered by each generation for its own era. Can we find ways to involve today's youth in such an exciting search? I firmly believe that they are eager to get started.

Further in his paper, Katona gives a quite important warning:

The function of teaching—at least beyond some minimal level—is not transmission of information. The teacher must find a way to motivate students to strive for understanding. The major task of students is to learn how to learn.

We need not so much to "wrestle with the minds of young America" as to *accept* the minds of young America. Accept them as being basically inquiring, slightly cynical, but ever so ready to become involved in seeking out the connection between precepts and practice; between values and living—in short, what they call "relevancy."

The request that led to this paper specified that I should emphasize facts and leave interpretation to you. Although "facts" in the sense of totally predictable natural phenomena don't really exist in the slippery area of human behavior, I have shared with you probabilistic observations about the youth of America as personality and sub-culture. You may or may not accept these as facts—even among behavioral scientists there are several better words: "observations," "predictions," and "hypotheses" for example. Nevertheless, they will fulfill the conditions of the working strategy of this conference. I will review the issues here to make very clear that it's *your* responsibility, not mine, to seek out the special implications for Christian Education:

1. What does a stance of acceptance look like in Christian education?
2. What is there among the youthful outcries for reform that the church should become involved in?
3. How do you help young people relate precepts to everyday living?
4. What can be done to capture the pre-revolutionaries for Christ—to really get them excited about a cause worth fighting for?
5. What guidelines for lesson planning and teacher training would reflect indoctrination or education?
6. How do you help Christian educators take an optimistic view of youth?

Just three weeks ago, the United States Commissioner of Education, James Allen, issued a statement to the principals of junior and senior high schools across the nation. He pointed out that there is reason to expect increased unrest in the nation's secondary schools: pointing out that schools should prepare themselves to meet the problems likely to arise as the younger, and potentially more volatile, teenagers take up the style and practices of their older collegiate brothers and sisters. He wisely warned that the preparation to meet this challenge should begin with a thorough housecleaning of policies and practices. Commissioner Allen could have been more blunt. He could have said explicitly what he said implicitly: That a good bit of the protest of youth today is defensible; that there are some very valid complaints. The society and its institutions are overdue for some important changes.

To view the alarm is an honest reaction, at least. And if it were not already so much a cliché, *panic* would become more popular! But the profound shortcoming of the state of panic is its numbing of the discriminations that would otherwise seek out alternative escapes. The profound shortcoming of the state of despair is its tendency to give in to hopelessness.

Where will it all end? What predictions can we make? What predictions *dare* we make? More importantly, will we write ourselves *into* or *out of* those predictions? Will we decide to make an impact? Will we decide *correctly* just how to make an impact that will alter the apparent course of crumble and decay?

Will it end in anarchy; in national catastrophe? To abandon hope seems unnecessary and unwise—unwise, because it can breed only a sense of futility and lethargy. Unnecessary, because there is still far too much that is genuine; too much that is solid, substantial, and foundational. Indeed the rudimentary and frank honesty of today's youth convinces me that we are entering a very hopeful era. We may be, with God's help, able to seize upon it for the cause of Jesus Christ.

This could be the beginning of an era in which the church of Jesus Christ will shine as a beacon above the turmoil of the world. If we are quick to set our house in order, to listen closely to what kids are trying to tell us, to respond in time—before disillusionment grips them—we will see great things done for God.

We cannot be remote from ourselves when we talk about youth. We cannot sit on some peak of Olympus and study through binoculars. We are involved. What we see in ourselves is as important as what we see in youth. We need to know far more than what makes them the way they are. We need to know what makes *us* the way we are and what makes us react to, and act upon, youth the way we do.

I was told that it was my professional identity and supposed scholarly viewpoint that led to my being invited to this conference. Yet, you can detect that these observations are drawn as much from personal as from professional grounds. I make no claim to true objectivity in this field—I am too much an actor on the stage of life to claim the rights of drama critic. What my colleagues in the behavioral sciences write certainly influences my perceptions and, hopefully, my level of understanding; but what I experience as a faculty member at the great university where we are trying to deal with the needs of 45,000 students is certainly more identifiably at the bottom of what I've been sharing. Perhaps these views are even more severely limited because I, too, am a Sunday school teacher—working with about 110 students in a collegiate class. And beyond that, I am the father of less than half a dozen of these youthful millions. Try as I will to perceive through the eyes of my children and my students, I confess that it is often very difficult to see things their way. Yet it's clear that they need me just as surely as I need them.

Perhaps this is the basis of understanding: To recognize that we can't *think* for each other, yet we need to help each other. We need our youth. They are the coming structure and substance of the church; they need us, too.

- Let's quit fretting about generation gaps.
- Let's leave behind the obsessions about failures.
- Let's find ways to build strength on strength.