

Question: “Are children behaving worse today than at any other time in history?”

There are many well-behaved young people of exemplary conduct in our society today. This article is not intended to cast them in a bad light. These, we hope, will be our nation’s future political and business leaders, educators and homemakers. On the other hand, our nation’s ill-behaved children seem to capture so much of our attention today, simply because of the nature of what they do. Pride and self-will seems to drive almost every action they take. I do not pretend to understand all of the underlying causes of these matters. We have all seen “good” children come from “bad” homes and vice versa. However, I can say without reservation that much of the behavioral problems among young people today stem from the fact that they are not held to a high standard of conduct, namely God’s standard revealed in the Bible.

The Law of Moses commanded young people to respect their elders, “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:32). The prophet Samuel was once mocked by the rebellious youth of his day while on his way to Bethel, “and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, ‘Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!’ So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths” (2 Kings 2:23-24).

Four hundred years before the birth of Jesus, one ancient philosopher noted, “Our youths love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority - they show disrespect for their elders and love to chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up food, and tyrannize teachers” (Socrates). It sounds like things haven’t changed much over the years.

In a telephone poll of 504 principals attending the National Association of Secondary School Principals convention in Orlando, Fla., 89% say they face profane language and provocative insults toward teachers or other students on a regular basis (USA Today, 3-11-97, p. 6D).

How are these problems solved? What steps must be taken to curb the behavioral problems among our young people? Will it take another world war and losing our children on the battlefield to change their behavior and to turn our nation back to God? Will an economic depression bring us to our knees before the Giver of every good and perfect gift? Perhaps, but a worldwide upheaval and societal disorder seem only to bring about temporary changes in people. Long lasting behavioral changes result from true repentance toward God and an earnest desire to search His word and do His will. Read the following scriptures and help your children understand the importance of living by them:

- 2 Pet 3:9 -- The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
- Matt 22:36-40 -- "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

- Matt 7:12 -- Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
- 1 Pet 5:5 -- Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
- Phil 2:3-4 -- Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

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