

JC Ryle's

**Advice to
Young Men**

Taken from, *Thoughts For Young Men*
J. C. Ryle (1816 - 1900)

John Charles (J.C) Ryle (1816-1900) was an Anglican Bishop in Liverpool England. Educated at Oxford, Ryle was a strong advocate for Evangelical truths, so much so that he was known as the “Evangelical Bishop.” Bishop Ryle retired at age 83 and died the following year.

The following is a summary of his outstanding book, *Thoughts for Young Men*. Ryle’s gentle but straightforward style with an emphasis on Biblical truth is exactly what this generation of young men need.

Dangers Young Men Face

1. Pride

Pride is the oldest sin in the world.

- Satan and his angels fell by pride. ...pride stocked hell with its first inhabitants.
- Pride threw Adam out of paradise.

Pride sits in all our hearts by nature.

- We are born proud.
- How common is it to see young men with big heads, high-minded, and impatient of any counsel!

Beware of pride!

- Remember how often Scripture and how strongly Scriptures warns against it
- Think of the great example of humility our Lord Jesus Christ

Young men, if you would be wise, if you would be happy, remember the warning I give you--Beware of pride.

2. The Love of Pleasure

Youth is the time when our passions are strongest--and like unruly children, cry most loudly for indulgence.

Earthly pleasures murder souls.

- There is no surer way to get a seared conscience and a hard heart towards the things of God, than to give way to the desires of the flesh and mind.
- Consider what Peter says: "Abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11).
- Consider what Paul says: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed" (Colossians 3:5). "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).
- Consider, again, the words of Paul: "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Romans 13:14).

Earthly pleasures will all be unsatisfying, empty, and pointless.

- All that glitters is not gold. All that tastes sweet is not good. All that pleases for a while is not real pleasure.
- Write the word "poison" on all earthly pleasures. Even the most lawful of them must be used in moderation.

- Remember the seventh commandment; to beware of adultery and sexual immorality, of all impurity of every kind.

Young men, if you love life; "Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). Like black grease, you cannot even touch it without getting dirty. Flee from the thoughts of it; resist them, destroy them, pray against them--make any sacrifice rather than give way to them

3. Thoughtlessness

Not thinking is one simple reason why thousands of souls are thrown away forever into the Lake of Fire.

Young men, none are in more danger of this than you.

- You know little of the perils around you
- You are careless how you walk.

Thinking is especially important for our souls

- "Don't think," whispers Satan
- "Consider your ways," says the Word of God

Thoughtlessness is too common

- Foolish talking
- Kidding,
- Joking
- Excessive amusement

God is serious, why then should you and I not be serious too?

- God is serious in observing us
- Christ is serious in interceding for us
- The Spirit is serious in striving with us
- The truths of God are serious
- Our spiritual enemies are serious in their endeavors to ruin us
- Poor lost sinners are serious in hell

Oh, young men, learn to be thoughtful!

4. Contempt of Christianity.

None pay so little respect to Christianity as young men.

Contempt of holy things is the straight road to hell.

- Once a man begins to make a joke of any part of Christianity, then I am never surprised to hear that he has turned out to be an unbeliever.

- Have you clearly looked into the fires which are before you, if you persist in despising Christianity?

Do not despise the Bible

- What will you believe, if you do not believe the Bible? There is no choice but to believe something ridiculous and absurd.
- Depend on it, no man is as grossly naive as the man who denies the Bible to be the Word of God; and if it be the Word of God, be careful that you don't despise it.
- Men may tell you that there are difficulties in the Bible; things hard to understand. Be very sure of this--people never reject the Bible because they cannot understand it. They understand it too well; they understand that it condemns their own behavior; they understand that it witnesses against their own sins, and summons them to judgment.
- Men try to believe the Bible is false, because they don't like to believe it is true.

Never laugh at Christianity. Never make a joke of sacred things. Never mock those who are serious and earnest about their souls. The time will come when your laughter will be turned into sorrow.

5. Fear of Man's Opinion.

Few young men seem to have any opinions of their own, or to think for themselves. Like dead fish, they go with the stream and tide. In a word, the opinion of the day becomes their religion, their creed, their Bible, and their God.

Young men, I want you all to be free from this bondage. I want each of you to care nothing about man's opinion, when the path of duty is clear. Believe me, it is a great thing to be able to say "No!"

Consider how unreasonable this fear of man is.

- How short lived is man's hostility
- How little harm he can do you!

Do not think it a disgrace to show that you are a servant of God.

- Never be afraid of doing what is right.
- Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Don't worry what the world says or thinks: you will not always be with the world.

- Can man save your soul? No.
- Will man be your judge in the great and dreadful Day of Judgment? No.
- Can man give you a good conscience in this life, a good hope in death? No! no! no!

Then, "Do not fear the reproach of men," or be terrified by their insults.

General Advice to Young Men

1. Try To Get A Clear View of The Evil Of Sin.

Young men, if you did know what sin is, and what sin has done, you would not think it so strange that I exhort you as I do. You do not see it in its true colors. Your eyes are naturally blind to its guilt and danger, and therefore you cannot understand what makes me so worried about you. Oh, don't let the devil succeed in persuading you that sin is a small matter!

Think for a moment what the Bible says about sin.

- It dwells naturally in the heart of every man (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23)
- It defiles our thoughts, words, and actions continually (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19)
- It renders us all guilty and abominable in the sight of a holy God (Isaiah 64:6; Habakkuk 1:13),
- It leaves us utterly without hope of salvation, if we look to ourselves (Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:20),
- Its fruit in this world is shame, and its wages in the world to come is death (Romans 6:21, 23).

Think what an awful change sin has worked on all our natures.

Man is no longer what he was when God formed him out of the dust of the ground. He came out of God's hand upright and sinless (Ecclesiastes 7:29). When he was created he was, "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Now he is a fallen creature

- Ruined
- Disorderly
- Ignorant
- Corrupted
- Confused
- Degraded
- Impotent

Like a rudderless ship tossed to and fro by every desire. What a wreck man is!

The Holy Spirit describes man as: blind, deaf, diseased, asleep, and dead,

Think what it has cost to make atonement and provide a pardon for sinners

- God's own Son must come into the world, and take upon Him our nature, in order to pay the price of our redemption, and deliver us from the curse of a broken law.
- He who was in the beginning with the Father, and by whom all things were made, must suffer for sin the just for the unjust--must die the death of a criminal, before the way to heaven can be laid open to any soul.

See the Lord Jesus Christ and then consider what must be the evil and guilt of sin.

- See Him despised

- See Him rejected
- See Him scourged
- See Him mocked
- See Him insulted
- See Him bleeding on the cross of Calvary
- Hear Him cry out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- See how the sun was darkened, and the rocks shook at the sight

Think of all the misery and sorrow that sin has caused and is causing

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| • Pain | • Disease | • Death |
| • Strife | • Quarrels | • Divisions |
| • Envy | • Jealousy | • Malice |
| • Deceit | • Fraud | • And Cheating |
| • Violence | • Oppression | • Robbery |
| • Selfishness | • Unkindness | • Ingratitude |

Sin has marred and spoiled the face of God's creation

Young men, consider these things. Will you play with poison? Will you sport with hell? Will you take fire in your hand? Will you harbor your deadliest enemy in your arms?

2. Seek To Become Acquainted with Jesus Christ

This is the cornerstone of Christianity. Without Christ religion is useless, like a watch that does not keep time.

You must know Christ

- His mercy
- His grace
- His power

You must know Christ by Faith, in your heart

- As your peace
- As your strength
- As your life
- As your consolation
- As your Physician
- As your Shepherd
- As your Savior
- As your God

Hear the request I make of you this day--if you love life, seek to become acquainted with Jesus Christ.

3. Remember, Nothing Is As Important As Your Soul

Your soul is eternal. The world and all that it contains will pass away

Think for a moment why God made you

- Not merely to eat and drink, indulge the desires of the flesh, dress up your body, and follow its lusts, not merely to work, sleep, laugh, talk, and enjoy yourselves.
- No! You were placed here to train for eternity.
- Young men, God does not look at riches, titles, education, beauty, or anything of the kind. There is only one thing that God does look at, and that is the immortal soul.
- Believe me, the day is fast coming when the soul will be the one thing men will think of, and the only question of importance will be, "Is my soul lost or saved?"

4. Remember, A Young Man Can Serve God

- It is as snare of Satan that says young men cannot serve God
- The world seems to take it for granted that young people must be irreligious, and that it is not possible for them to follow Christ.
- Young men, I will ask you this simple question--Where will you find anything of this in the Word of God?
- Is not sin--sin, whether committed at the age of twenty or fifty? Will it form the slightest excuse, in the Day of Judgment, to say, "I know I sinned, but I was young then?"

5. Make The Bible Your Guide And Adviser

The Bible is

- God's merciful provision for sinful man's soul
- The map by which he must steer his course
- All that we need to make us peaceful, holy, or happy, is richly contained there

Young men, I charge you to make a habit of reading the Bible

- Read it with the prayer that the Holy Spirit's grace will help you understand it.
- Read it reverently, as the Word of God, not of man, believing implicitly that what it approves is right, and what it condemns is wrong.
- And read it regularly. Become "mighty in the Scriptures."
- Do not let newspapers, novels, and romances be read, while the prophets and Apostles are despised.

Young men, give the Bible the honor due to it every day you live. Whatever you read, read that first. And beware of bad books: there are plenty in this day.

6. Never Make An Intimate Friend Of Anyone Who Is Not A Friend Of God.

Distinguish between acquaintances and friends

- Be courteous, but do not open your whole heart to the ungodly
- Never be satisfied with the friendship of any one who will not be useful to your soul
- There is no telling the harm that is done by associating with godless companions and friends.
- The devil has few better helps in ruining a man's soul
- Good education, early habits of morality, sermons, and books, are of little help if you cling to ungodly friends.

Good Friends

- Good friends are among our greatest blessings
- Good friends keep us from evil
- Good friends remind us of our course
- Good friends speak an appropriate word at the right time
- Good friends incline our thought to
- Good friends encourage us

Bad Friends

- Bad friends are a burden
- Bad friends are a weight continually dragging us down
- Bad friends chain us to earth

Choose your friends wisely:

- Friends who will benefit your soul,
- Friends whom you can really respect,
- Friends whom you would like to have near you on your deathbed
- Friends who love the Bible, and are not afraid to speak to you about it
- Friends that you would not be ashamed of having at the coming of Christ, and the day of judgment.

SPECIAL RULES FOR YOUNG MEN

1. Resolve, By God's Help, To Break Off Every Known Sin

Examine your own hearts. Do you see there any habit or custom which you know is wrong in the sight of God? Resolve at once to lay it aside.

A small leak will sink a great ship, and a small spark will kindle a great fire, and a little allowed sin in like manner will ruin an immortal soul.

No wicked man ever meant to be so wicked at his first beginnings. But he began with allowing himself some little sins, and that led on to something greater, and that in time produced something greater still, and thus he became the miserable being that he now is.

The devil only wants to get the wedge of a little allowed sin into your heart, and you will soon be all his own.

There are two ways of going to hell:

- One is to walk into it with your eyes open--few people do that
- The other is to go down by the steps of little sins--and that way, is only too common

2. Resolve, By God's Help, To Shun Every Occasion Of Sin.

This is one great reason why idleness is to be avoided. If David had not given opportunity to the devil, by walking on his house-top in Jerusalem with nothing to do, he probably never would have seen Bathsheba bathing, nor murdered her husband Uriah.

Worldly Amusements, though not always sinful in themselves, are dangerous:

- They sow the seeds of an earthly and sensual frame of mind.
- They war against the life of faith.
- They promote an unhealthy and unnatural craving after excitement.
- They minister to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.
- They dim the view of heaven and eternity, and give a false color to the things of time. They take away time for private prayer, and Scripture reading, and calm communion with God.

What is the use of your praying, "Lord keep me from temptation," unless you are careful not to run into it and "keep me from evil," unless you show a desire to keep out of its way?

Young men, be wise with your time. Do not always be trying to see how near you can allow the enemy of souls to come, and yet escape him. Hold him at arm's length. Try to keep clear of temptation as far as possible, and this will be one great help to keep clear of sin.

3. Resolve Never To Forget The Eye Of God.

The eye of God! Think of that. Everywhere, in every house, in every field, in every room, in every company, alone or in a crowd, the eye of God is always on you. "The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good" (Proverbs 15:3), and they are eyes that read hearts as well as actions.

Remember the Eye of God

- Remember that you have to deal with an all-seeing God a God who never sleeps, a God who understands your thoughts, and with whom the night shines as the day.

- You may leave your father's house, and go away, like the prodigal, into a far country, and think that there is nobody to watch your conduct; but the eye and ear of God are there before you.
- You may deceive your parents or employers, you may tell them lies, and act one way before their faces, and another behind their backs, but you cannot deceive God. He knows you through and through.
- He heard what you said as you came here today. He knows what you are thinking of at this minute. He has set your most secret sins in the light of His countenance, and they will one day come out before the world to your shame, except you take heed.

Live as in the sight of God

- Do nothing that you would not like God to see.
- Say nothing, you would not like God to hear.
- Write nothing, you would not like God to read.
- Go no place where you would not like God to find you.
- Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Show it to Me."
- Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like to have God say, "What are you doing?"

4. Be Diligent In The Practice Of Your Christianity.

Be regular in going to church, whenever it is open for prayer and preaching, and it is in your power to attend. Be regular in keeping, the Lord's day holy, and determine that God's day out of the seven shall always be given to its rightful owner.

Sunday's are for God's honor and for fellowship with His people

- Do not let excuses keep you from it
- Do not let not the example of all those around you keep you from it
- Do not let the invitation of companions keep you from it

And one thing is very certain, your feelings about Sunday and the fellowship will always be a test and criterion of your fitness for heaven. Fellowship and worship are a foretaste and a fragment of heaven. The man who finds them a burden and not a privilege, may be sure that his heart stands in need of a mighty change.

5. Resolve That Wherever You Are, You Will Pray.

Prayer is the means by which God gives His precious gifts:

- Renewal
- Sanctification
- Purification
- Strength
- Cheer
- Encouragement
- Enlightenment

- Instruction
- Direction
- Guidance

Young men, believe me, if your soul is to be saved, you must pray. God has no speechless children.

Young men, be sure no time is so well spent as that which a man spends on his knees.

Conclusion

Corrupt and ruined by the fall as we are, each of us has a conscience. In a corner of each heart there sits a witness for God, a witness who condemns when we do wrong, and approves when we do right.

I appeal to your conscience, while you have strength, and time, and opportunity.

- Resolve this day to remember your Creator in the days of your youth
- Join yourself to the Lord in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten

Make haste, and don't delay.

- The Spirit will not always strive
- The voice of conscience will become feebler and fainter if you continue to resist

Almost all the eminent saints of God sought the Lord early.

- Moses
- Samuel
- David
- Daniel

Resolve this day to be useful. Give your hearts at once to Christ.

- Think of the comfort you will give to parents, relatives, and friends
- Think of the good you might be doing for the world
- Think of your responsibilities
- Think of the privilege and luxury of doing good
- Think, lastly, of the happiness that will come to your own soul, if you serve God