

GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Adolescents in Adult Bodies

Acts 12:24–25; 13:1–13



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In our previous study, we gave attention to three proofs of growth. We saw all three illustrated in an early church congregation (Acts 4:32–37). Although young in the faith, those Jerusalem believers demonstrated a commendable growth toward maturity. But this condition was not found throughout all congregations. As is true today, there were some who were old enough to be well on their way to maturity, but they preferred to remain immature and irresponsible . . . adolescents in adult bodies. In this biographical message, we shall take a look at three such people. Remember, each one was old enough to know better, but they deliberately chose to act out attitudes and a lifestyle that reflected an unwillingness to grow up. As we analyze these biblical characters, let's not fail to ask what the disciples once asked Jesus: "Lord, is it I?"



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Undeniable Characteristics of Adolescence

- Instability when the going gets rough
- Irresponsibility when the world becomes appealing
- Insensitivity when the will is challenged

2. Modeling Those Characteristics in the Early Church

- John Mark, who walked away (Acts 12:24, 25; 13:1–13; 15:36–40)
- Demas, who loved the world (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:23–25; 2 Timothy 4:9–11)
- Diotrefes, who wanted to be first (3 John 9–10)



Quotable

*The insecure
Christian knows
little about staying
on course when
life is painful and
hard to deal with.*

*The secret?
Trust and obey.*
— Charles R. Swindoll



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3. Ways to Guard against “Permanent Adolescence”

- When wrestling with restlessness, realize the benefits of faithfulness.
- When allured by irresponsibility, think of the consequences of carnality.
- When tempted to manipulate and dominate, remember the lordship of Christ.



A CLOSER LOOK

Loving the World

Paul considered Demas a “fellow worker”—a high compliment from the apostle. But something happened inside Demas. He once followed Christ earnestly, or Paul never would have invited him to join his entourage. Demas once demonstrated courage and determination, for traveling with Paul would have demanded nothing less (Acts 15:37–38).

No more. Demas had abandoned Paul for what the apostle termed a “love [for] this present world,” which is no insignificant condemnation. Paul used the distinctly Christian verb *agapao*, normally reserved for people, to say that Demas “loved this present world.” “This present world” refers not only to the worldly pursuits of money, power, status, pleasure, or possessions. Jesus identified the enemy of God’s kingdom as “the world” (John 15:18–19).

“The world” does not mean the earth per se. The planet does not have a mind, so it cannot be evil. Nature has been twisted and corrupted by evil, but it is not evil in itself. In fact, Paul personified nature as an innocent bystander, suffering the ill effects of evil, groaning for redemption by its rightful Owner (Romans 8:20–22). Instead, “the world” represents the fallen world system, which operates according to Satan’s values and is subject to the curse of sin (Genesis 3:14–19). “The world” also represents the people who live by its values and willingly serve its ends. Jesus originally came to redeem the world (John 3:17; 12:47), but the world rejected Him (3:18; 12:48); therefore, He began to separate “His own” from the world (10:14, 26–27; 13:1; 15:19).

To say that someone loves “this present world” is to say that he or she is an enemy of God’s kingdom (1 John 2:15–17).¹



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LET'S LIVE IT

What worldly vices lure you the most? Write down the consequences of succumbing to such temptations. Be specific about how falling into temptation might affect your relationship with the Lord, those you love in your family, and your community of faith.

Also, consider inviting some close Christian friends or the members of your small group or community group to come alongside you in prayer—asking the Lord to strengthen you in a particular area of weakness and even to deliver you from bondage.

ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Carol Stream, Ill., Tyndale, 2014), 264–65.



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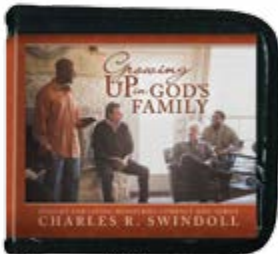
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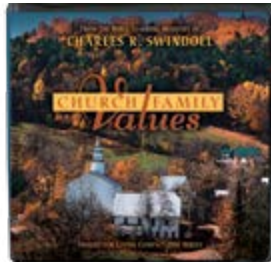
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