

International Youth Day (12 August 2020)

Growth for Youth

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Dear young friend, I greet you on this International Youth Day wishing you all the best in every area of your life! Youthhood is the most enjoyable period of life which you would never get again. To make best use of it, I give here some practical counsel as a 74-year young grandpa. I am a Postgraduate in Foundation Engineering from IIT Madras, belonging to the 1968-70 batch.

It is written about Jesus in the Bible that as a teenager, He grew in (1) Wisdom, (2) Stature, (3) Favour with God and (4) Favour with men (Luke 2:52). This means wholesome growth: (1) Intellectual Growth, (2) Physical Growth, (3) Spiritual Growth and (4) Social Growth. Here's how you can experience these dimensions —

(1) Intellectual Growth: Thank God for the limitless educational facilities you have today which were unknown to those of yesteryears. Concentrate on your studies, whether in school or college. Exams are important but accumulation of as much knowledge as possible will be an asset to you. Avoid distractions like falling in love and watching too many movies. Time is gold. Respect your teachers and be regular in attendance and assignments. Besides textbooks, read newspapers regularly. I read *The Hindu* for news, *The New Indian Express* for views, and *Dinamani* to keep my Tamil updated. Note down new and striking words and look for an opportunity to use them. *Frontline*, *Outlook*, *India Today* and *Reader's Digest* are informative periodicals. In these days of hectic competition, a mere pass will take you nowhere. Aim high. Aspiration helps achievement. I scored 95% in my final semester of M.Tech. as the class-topper. Try civil services. Don't feel dejected if you are not able to shine. God has a unique plan for each life.

(2) Physical Growth: The body is a gift from God. I don't know why I was born without any defect when there are millions born deaf, dumb, blind and so on. I thank the Almighty everyday and pray for the differently abled. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Have balanced diet. Avoid junk food as much as possible. Do not eat out too often. Be thankful to mummy who takes so much pain to prepare dishes for you with love. Dress fashionably but modestly. Avoid extravagance. Keep sex distinctions. Do not get addicted to motorised vehicles. Till date I enjoy bicycling. Say no to false prestige. Go for walks in the open-air to enjoy God's creation. Be brisk. Join games and sports. Do not delay medical attention to any problem. Health is wealth. "Early to bed and early to rise," is a golden rule. I sleep off at nine and get up at four. Be punctual. Discipline pays off.

(3) Spiritual Growth: I follow Jesus the historical Figure because no one was ever born supernaturally like Him; no one lived sinlessly like Him; no one served people sincerely like Him; no one taught substantially like Him; no one died sacrificially like Him; and no one superhumanly rose again like Him. I committed my life to Him at my age of sixteen and I have no regrets. I'm glad I have given the best part of my life to Him. I set aside the first hours of the day to read the Bible and pray. Life is a journey from birth to death. Life before death is the preparation for life after death. Premarital and extramarital sex robs us of enjoying God's best. Holy life is jolly life. Stay clear of addictive habits. Mobile phone addiction is dangerous. Take all your needs and problems to God in prayer. Seek professional counselling where necessary. Learn from elders and spiritual leaders. Be adorned with sincerity and simplicity. My disadvantages of early life became an advantage later.

(4) Social Growth: It's sickening to see the society all around us filled with hatred, jealousy, scheming, lying and the like. We must love others as ourselves. Be respectful while interacting with elders. Obey your parents though they may not be so knowledgeable as you. Be polite. Bad company corrupts good manners. Never ever speak with double meaning. Speak the truth and nothing but the truth. Keep your conscience clear. You will be happy and guiltfree. Obey the Government. Do not join the strikers who destroy properties. Be a peacemaker in the campus. The theme of the International Youth Day of 2020 is, "*Youth Engagement for Global Action.*" Join social services. Do your best to uplift the poor locally, nationally and globally. Millions still go to bed hungry.

I do not want to bore you with too many advices. Let me stop here wishing you a lush and sturdy growth under God's sunshine! Bye!

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