

## **Age of Accountability**

It has long been a question as to what age our young people ought to become Christians. Should it be as they enter their teens and begin at that early age in their service to Christ, or should they wait until they know a little more and can be more dependable, say their late teens or even early twenties? It would take a wise man to give a precise answer. Perhaps some biblical pictures would help us along this line.

Joseph was about 17 when he was torn from home ties and taken into Egypt as a slave. Was he accountable to God at this age? He thought so. When tempted by Potiphar's wife he said he could not do this wickedness and sin against Jehovah. It is true that this temptation came after he had been in Egypt long enough to have advanced in Potiphar's house but in these years, "*The Lord was with him*" and "*he was a goodly person.*" By the time he left home his patterns of righteousness were set. With proper training young people are accountable at age 17 to serve God properly.

Josiah was 8 years old when he became king of Judah. At the age of 16 "*While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father*" (II Chronicles 34:3). Then, by the time he was twenty he began to rid the land of idol worship. By the age of 26, he was repairing the house of God that had been in disrepair. Of him, from age 8 it was said, "*And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left*" (II Chronicles 34:2).

Jesus went up to Jerusalem with His parents for the first time at the age of 12. He was lost from His parents for three days. When they found Him He was in the temple conversing with the doctors. All who heard were astonished at His understanding and answers. When asked concerning His whereabouts while lost He said, "*Know ye not that I must be about My Father's business?*" (Luke 2:48). From then on He advanced in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and man. But some would say that Jesus was divine. True! But he was also human, and we are to exemplify what He did in the flesh. If we are to be as He was when He was older, why not when He was younger?

Sometimes we sell our young people short by not expecting of them what they are capable of. And sometimes they use this as an excuse.

**- by Morris D. Norman**

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## **Books "Missing" From the Bible?**

In recent times we have seen an explosion of material alleging that the Bible that we have is not complete. Many theories have been advanced that speak of all kinds of other books that were "banned" from the Bible, "taken out" of the Bible, and other such ideas, and that such was done by the Catholics in the fourth century. These ideas, which have been circulating for some time, have received renewed interest on account of the popularity of Dan Brown's book, *The Da Vinci Code*, the movie based on the book, and the recent unveiling of the discovery of the "lost" Gospel of Judas. Many television channels, taking advantage of the popularity of this subject, have aired stories involving professors and some "authorities" from various denominations talking about these books and calling into question the validity of the Bibles we possess. Perhaps you have heard something about these stories, read some of the information, or perhaps have seen the movie or the television shows. Maybe you are wondering: were there books taken out of the Bible? Can we trust the Bible?

We should first say that yes, there are books claiming to be gospels or letters of Apostles or other such works that were written in the second through fourth centuries. These books are not present in the Bible.

It is important to note, however, exactly why these books are not present in the Bible. They are not present in the Bible, not because they were banned from it or taken out of it by some conspiring Catholics, but because they were not written by the Apostles, and more often than not, were written by a group of heretics called the Gnostics. The Gnostics were people who mixed Greek philosophy and Christianity and developed a religion unsuitable to either. On the Christian end, they were roundly condemned even in the New Testament on account of their denial that Jesus was really a man, that He really died, and that the God of the Old Testament is the one

true God. We can read about such matters in II Timothy 2:16-18, John 1:1-18; I John 1:1; I John 4:2-3; and II John 1:7, where both Paul and John teach against the ideas that the resurrection was past and that Jesus was not born in the flesh, both concepts present in Gnosticism and featured in the various gospels and other works attributed to them. We can see why, then, the Gnostic writings were rejected.

These "missing" books were never really missing; we knew of their existence because the early Christians who opposed them would write about their beliefs and the books they were writing.

In the end, we must recognize that these books are not in the Bible because they have no right to be in the Bible. They were not written by inspired men, the majority of them were written by people who were trying to advance views contrary to those found in the New Testament, and they were rejected on the basis of sound deliberation, and rejected as soon as they were written. Let us not be disturbed in our faith because of these books, and we can be confident in the truth of the Bible.

- by **Ethan L. Longhenry**

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## ***Are You Getting Better?***

Here's a challenge for you: ***Try to find a single place in the Scriptures where the Lord ever encountered a person and encouraged him to stay as he was.***

You can't do it, can you? The Lord always encouraged people to change; to become better than they previously were.

We know, of course, that some were already morally purer than others. For instance:

- Cornelius was "a devout man who feared God...gave alms liberally...and prayed constantly" (Acts 10:2).
- But then there were folks like the Corinthians who had been immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, and robbers (1 Cor.6:9-11).

But, regardless of their existing condition, all who learned the gospel had to change. Why? Paul answered that question for us: "*There is none righteous, no, not one*" (Romans 3:10).

There are too many people who call themselves Christians who have never gotten serious about making changes and improvements in their lives. They still want to act like they used to act, dress like they used to dress, talk like they used to talk, etc. The heart of the problem may be that we have failed to see ourselves as real sinners. After all, it is reasoned, we aren't nearly as bad as many others in our society.

We need to stop deceiving ourselves by such useless comparisons (2 Cor. 10:12). The statistics have never changed, and it still remains true - "*there is none righteous, no, not one.*" That being the case, we need to be changing, improving, for the Lord.

- by **Greg Gwin**