

Aim of lesson

To prepare the young people to cope with a new environment and living away from home and to consider whether some subjects are a better choice than others.

Bible background

Proverbs 1:7; Ecclesiastes 12:1, 11-14; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14

Preparation required

Read through the notes and decide how you are going to present the lesson depending on the students in your group. Many of these verses from Proverbs apply to life in general and, although it is appropriate to consider these things when maybe the students will be taking full responsibility for their own actions for the first time, you may wish to select a few to give the gist of what they need to think about.

Choice of subject is of course very important but if the students have done lesson 5 they will probably have covered much of this section.

Some of these issues may seem a little alarming and indeed some students may already be apprehensive about striking out on their own. Others may feel they can't wait to be away from the watchful eye of their parents. Be prepared to discuss the issues that are most appropriate to your group.

Suggested outline of lesson

Coping with a new environment away from home

The whole of the book of Proverbs contains useful guidance for young people on the point of leaving home and there are some good tips at the end of Ecclesiastes too. Solomon makes the point that wisdom and understanding are greatly to be desired (Proverbs 4:7), but that the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 1:7), and that self-discipline is a necessary adjunct (Proverbs 1:2 NIV). Fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7). We are responsible for our actions even when we are children (Proverbs 20:11) and we should serve God while we are young (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Some Do's

- Be eager to learn - Proverbs 18:15
- Think before you act and speak - Proverbs 13:3, 16, 19:2
- Accept correction - Proverbs 17:10
- Control your temper - Proverbs 16:32
- Be moderate in your appetites - Proverbs 25:16
- Exhibit patience and ignore wrong - Proverbs 19:11
- Follow God now - Ecclesiastes 12:1

Some Don'ts

- Don't lie all day in bed! - Proverbs 6:6-11
- Don't waste your time - Proverbs 6:9
- Don't waste your money on drink - Proverbs 23:29-35
- Don't waste your money on immoral women - Proverbs 7:7, 21
- Don't risk your own position by guaranteeing a stranger's debt - Proverbs 22:26
- Don't consort with fools - Proverbs 13:20
- Don't mix with people with violent tempers - Proverbs 22:24; and evil men - Proverbs 4:14
- Don't make yourself ill with study - Ecclesiastes 12:12

Two examples of sons leaving home:

The prodigal son - Luke 15

He exhibits all the bad qualities:

- Lack of patience (not prepared to work for his inheritance)
- squanders his wealth on wild living
- consorts with worthless people

Jesus at the beginning of his ministry - Luke 4

He exhibits total self-discipline:

- the ability to overcome immediate bodily cravings
- the patience to wait for his reward
- the humility not to flaunt his position

Choice of University or College

The young people in your group will probably not realise how difficult it can be to enjoy further education whilst still trying to follow Christian principles. If they can go to a place where there are friends with the same aspirations and perhaps live in a student house with them, they can be saved many agonising decisions and even drastic mistakes. If you are not in a position yourself to explain this you may be able to get other students in your ecclesia to tell them how glad they were that they went somewhere where there were like-minded friends (or sorry that they didn't). They should also be encouraged to choose a university which is near an ecclesia which has other young people or who are sympathetic to students.

Some subjects are a better choice than others?

If we assume that the course of study chosen leads to a directly related occupation, then there are obviously areas to avoid at all cost, and others which are only marginally less compromising. Be careful not to repeat what was discussed in lesson 5. It may be suitable just to ask whether anyone's choice of career has changed since your previous discussion or whether any further problems have arisen. You may also choose to talk about individual problems with one of the young people on his or her own afterwards. In all our deliberations we should bear in mind the following:

- "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." - Romans 12:2
- "Ye cannot serve both God and Money." - Luke 16:13
- "Let us do good to all people." - Galatians 6:10
- "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." - 2 Corinthians 6:14

Whatever we choose to study, our choice should not involve an impossible compromise of our beliefs, our actions, our time and our money, all of which are the Lord's if we seek a treasure in heaven - Galatians 6:7-8.

Subjects to avoid at all costs

- Military and police academies
- Politics (national and local)
- Law

These are professions which govern the world. The tutor may consider the plight of those already in these professions when they come to a knowledge of the truth. Are there any half-way houses, e.g., company secretary, solicitor restricting himself to wills, conveyancing etc. and avoiding litigation? Why should one not be a barrister? (Answer: client's best interests versus the truth.)

Subjects to avoid if possible

- Dramatic Arts
- Theology and Philosophy
- Media Studies
- Corporate Finance and the Stock Exchange

These are professions which are very much yoked to the world: they reflect the world's behaviour, beliefs and aspirations and pose very real problems for the disciple of Christ, who is told "Come out from among them and be separate." - 2 Corinthians 6:17.

Dramatic arts - consider the general falseness of the world of theatrical entertainment, its degenerate standards and the morally indefensible roles which one might be obliged to portray.

Theology and philosophy - why bother to make the world's vain philosophy the subject of three or four years' study.

Media studies - are there areas of journalism (newspaper, film and television) and advertising which it would be better to avoid, and others which are acceptable? What compromises are involved?

Finance - The high-flier could be faced with some very unsavoury situations: insider information, "bear raids", doctoring of balance sheets, fixing of markets, lending to immoral individuals, companies and countries for very questionable purposes, living in an unreal world of frenetic mega-money transactions.

Better choices of subject

It is easy to identify those subjects which the disciple of Christ should avoid, but less easy to identify which are good. Compromises and problems occur in all walks of life and it depends very much on the individual as to how he or she copes with them. One could consider the following studies as very positive and worthwhile:

- Medicine
- Teaching
- Social Services
- Environmental Studies
- For the scientifically minded, subjects such as Applied Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics which concentrate on the facts of our world rather than man's interpretation.

However, these studies have their practical problems too, e.g., the doctor has to cope with such dilemmas as abortion, eugenics, allocation of scarce financial resources, constant high-level stress and unsociable hours. The teacher may have to cope with violent school children and an intolerable workload which can undermine his health, to such an extent that he is too tired to give of his best in the service of the truth.

General guidelines for a career

Help the young people to fill in this section in their books in the most appropriate way for your particular group. It will probably depend what they are like or what they have discovered new.

Relevance to our lives

Decisions made at this time in our young peoples' lives could affect their whole lives and even their salvation. A lot of discussion will take place at school so it is really important that we help the young people to see the situation from a scriptural point of view.

Prayer

Discuss with the group how important it is to commit issues like this to God at all stages of the decision making process. Get them to write a prayer of their own to suit their particular circumstances.

Other suggestions for activities

Think about:

- Paul - a well-educated man who gave up his career and counted his education as 'rubbish' in order to win Christ. Philippians 3:5-9.
- David - a simple shepherd boy whom God called from his sheep to become the king of a great empire. Think how his training as a shepherd enabled him to be a good king. Psalm 78:70-72.