

- ***READ I Samuel 1:21-28*** Here in this text, we are introduced to a woman by the name of Hannah and her husband Elkanah. The section we read together shows that they have a young son who we later come to know as Samuel. It was time for them to go up to offer yearly sacrifices, but Hannah stayed back at her home, and said that she would make this journey once the boy was weaned off of her because that trip with her son would end in him staying with the priest. If we were to read a bit earlier in the chapter, we would see what took place which is referenced by Hannah when she speaks of having prayed for this son of hers. Hannah was a woman who did not have a child, but she wanted one so badly. We see earlier in the chapter that she indeed did pray for this son of hers to be born, and promised God that if He gave her a son that she would dedicate him to the Lord's service. Hannah's prayers were answered and she followed through faithfully with her promise.
- I wanted to start with this text so simply show that it is a very natural thing for parents to pray for their children. In fact, we see that it is totally appropriate to even pray for future children that might be born to us. Of course, praying for children is a very natural thing, or at least it should be. I have yet to meet a mom or dad yet who were disciples and didn't value their children above anything else on this earth. Faith aside, there is nothing more precious to a disciple than children that have been graciously given to them by our heavenly Father.
- With this being the case, we often do find ourselves offering up very heart felt prayers to God on behalf of our children. We pray that the Lord might give them to us. We pray that they would grow and develop in their mom's womb healthily. We pray that we help them to grow and develop as little children. We pray for their safety. We pray for their hearts to come to know God Himself. And then August rolls around and we stop praying for them once school begins, right? Of course not! If anything, we begin to pray even more fervently for them because we know that there are many possible difficulties that they might face while away from us during the school year.
- There are many different things that we might pray for on behalf of our children as they begin a new school year. We might pray, again, that they make it safely through any given school day. We might pray that they do well in their studies and make good grades. We might pray that they make lots of good friends. However, we certainly realize that there is nothing better for us to pray for for our children while at school than for things of a spiritual nature. This evening, we are going to use our time of study considering 4 different prayers that we can and should be praying on behalf of our students as they make their way back to school and through another academic year. School is not a time when God should be forgotten, but it is a time when we should emphasize the Lord all the more. Therefore, let's focus our minds on spiritual things as we consider these four prayers this evening.

Let us pray that they:

I. Make up their minds.

A. Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were able to remain pure because they made up their minds to always please God.

1. It was during the reign of the king Jehoiakim of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar comes upon Jerusalem and overtakes her. Once they return to Babylon, the king demands that the best of the best of the Jews be brought into the king's court so that they be taught how to live as Chaldeans. Four well known young Jewish men named Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah were among those brought into the king's court.
2. In **Daniel 1:5-21** we read of Daniel's decision to not partake of the king's choice food and wine that was offered to these handpicked Jews. He knew within his mind that this food and drink would cause him to be defiled in the eyes of his God, so the text tells us that *"Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which*

he drank." (**Daniel 1:8**) God was with Daniel for his integrity and granted him favor in the eyes of the commander of the officials. He allowed for Daniel and the three other young Jewish men to only eat vegetables and drink water as a test to see if they would be better off than those who ate of the choice foods of the king.

3. When it came to the end of those days, the young men were presented before Nebuchadnezzar and the Bible tells us that "*out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.*" (**Daniel 1:19**) Their willingness to make up their minds to not defile themselves before God allowed for God to bless them abundantly in this new and strange land. No matter the possible trouble before them, they were determined to do exactly as God would have them to do. That was the only focus of their minds, to be pleasing to God.

B. Even at a younger age, our children should be encouraged to make God their focal point.

1. These young men were taken away from their homes and made captives in a strange place they would rather not be. To come to think of it...that often sounds like school to our kids at times doesn't it? Haha! But the reality is that our kids while at school or off in college are not going to be under the sheltering wings of their parents as they face the possible difficulties that await them.
2. Therefore, it is vitally important that they make up their own minds to be able to steer as far away from danger and sin as possible. As young people, their lack of experience can sometimes work against them because they have not yet fully trained themselves to be on the constant look out for danger, so that means that we as their parents and loved ones constantly remind them to remember who they are, and that we encourage them to make up their own minds about always desiring to be pleasing to God. Then on top of that we need to constantly be praying for their spiritual vitality and wellbeing.
3. The hope through our instruction and prayers is that they train themselves to be able to spot danger so that they avoid potential temptations ahead of time. However, we must recognize that they are not always in control of the dangers that surround them. Sometimes instead of being able to avoid temptation, they must face it. Hopefully they have made up their minds to only honor God and that leads them to do the next thing we can be praying for on their behalves...

II. Run from temptation.

A. Joseph literally ran away from the temptation of Potiphar's wife.

1. This is essentially what Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah did when they refused the king's choice food, but we know the best example of such a thing being done by a young person in the Bible is that of Joseph when he ran away from the advances of Potiphar's wife. We can read about this taking place in **Genesis 39**.
2. Joseph is found by the grace of God to be a very successful young man in everything that he did. Potiphar took quick notice of Joseph and appointed him as the head over his entire household. However Potiphar's wife took notice of the other fact that Joseph was handsome and began making advances towards Joseph. Yet, Joseph refused and stated that he couldn't betray the man who had put him in charge of his own house. Further, Joseph states that he could never do something that was so evil in the eyes of His God. Like Daniel, Joseph seems to have made up his mind that he would only do the right thing before God. Joseph wasn't willing to even entertain the idea of putting himself in this situation. (**Genesis 39:6-10**)
3. However, Joseph was forced into such a situation when Potiphar's wife tries to trap him in the house and force him to be with her. Yet, Joseph literally runs out of the garment he is wearing and flees the situation and the temptation. (**Genesis 39:11-13**) He was completely unwilling to be there in that place and entertain the possibility of sinning in such a manner before God. He serves as a wonderful example of how all young people ought to respond to temptation.

- B. Even if they avoid temptation, it will seek out our students and they will have to run from it.**
1. Parents and loved ones, are we praying that our students be able to respond appropriately to the temptations that come upon them? We obviously will seek to teach them and pray that they avoid those situations, but there will come times when they will not be in control of such things when temptations come upon them. They will only be able to control how they will respond to such temptations.
 2. There will be times when their friends make poor decisions and those decisions present our students with opportunities to do things they ought not do. There will be times when basic peer pressure from all sides tempts them to try to blend in with the crowd. There will be times when they will simply want to fit in and be liked by others and to do so demands they do something they know they ought not do. Let's be constantly praying for them to have the courage and conviction of heart to be able to do like Joseph and flee such a situation. It might come at a cost in regards to their friends or popularity among others, but we know that in the long run they will be so much better off for standing strong as they have and they will be fulfilling another prayer that we ought to be praying on their behalf...

III. Show themselves as examples.

- A. Even through Timothy was young, Paul still expected a great example to be shown in his life.**
1. Even though Timothy was a young man, he and Paul's other young preaching protegee, Titus, were sent out among the Lord's churches fulfilling their role as preachers by setting churches in order. **(Titus 1:5)** For anyone this could be a very daunting task, but adding to the struggle could have been the fact that both Timothy and Titus seem to have been younger men. I'm sure some of us have been in situations where our youth worked against us in regard to having others lead them in some sort of fashion, and our students might be looked down upon by older people or even their peers.
 2. However, Paul wasn't going to allow for youth to be an excuse for Timothy, especially. In **I Timothy 4:12-16**, the Apostle Paul strongly encourages and instructions for Timothy to allow for his actions to speak for the type of man that he was before God. ***"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself as example to those who believe."*** Even though he was young, Paul expected for Timothy to behave and grow in such a way that others would see him as a shining example of what a good godly disciple ought to be like. In his specific role as a preacher, Timothy was to take great care to make sure that his growth was able to be seen by all people. Even though our young people are still in school as students, we can and should pray that they are shining as examples in the places they find themselves during the school year.
- B. Few greater encouragements can be found than for a young disciple to shine brightly for the Lord.**
1. Thinking back upon my own school experience, it doesn't take long to remember how easy it was to simply blend in with the crowd and think, do, and say just as they did. However, it took much more courage and effort to discipline myself to rise above the negative influences and try to show myself as an example of a God-fearing young person.
 2. Much like what we discussed this morning, God expects for all of His people, young or older, to show themselves as being different from the world around us. Where the world might speak with course or off colored language...we are to only speak words that are seasoned with salt and grace. Where the world might behave in whatever way they seem best...we are only to conduct ourselves in a godly manner. Where the world my hate those around them...we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Where the world might live as if there is no God...we are to live a life that shows our faith in God. Where the world might dwell upon thought and actions of impurity...we are to keep ourselves pure and unspotted from the world. While we as adults

are most definitely focused on such things everyday, we need to recognize that this is what we should expect from our students as well. Let's take great efforts to instruct them in these ways, and then let's give great effort to pray that the Lord strengthen them to take such instruction and live it out in their day to day lives in the school setting. This is obviously our prayer for them as our students that we love, but we also ought to pray this be their reality because it can then give opportunity for them to fulfill our final prayer on their behalf...

IV. Lead others to the Lord.

A. Disciples are to live in such a way that they influence others to seek the better way of the Lord.

1. Timothy was not only to live as such a good example for his own sake and the sake of his brethren, but he was also to live in such a way so that others might be led to seek the Lord. As citizens of God's kingdom, we have been charged by Jesus in **Matthew 5:13-16** to serve as strong influences inside and outside of the kingdom.
2. In this text, we are told that we ought to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Both of these are influential factors. Salt causes things to taste better and causes preservation while light illuminates and brings sight to things surrounding it. We are to be that towards all others around us with our influence. We, as disciples and kingdom citizens, are to influence others to be able to see the truth of this life's reality more clearly. We are to show them the better way of Jesus so that they too might be in a position where they can be saved in the end. It is our hope that through our godly example and influence that others will want to live in the same manner in which we are living. This is surely something we should be praying for regarding ourselves, but it is also something we ought to be praying for on behalf of our students as they are surrounded daily by other young people who don't yet know God.

B. Our young people have the power through their influence to encourage others to seek God.

1. There is a common thought among some that our students who are young disciples shouldn't worry themselves with trying to use their example to influence those who are around them to seek God themselves. However, I don't see anything within this text, other texts, and especially not in **I Timothy 4:12** that would lead me to believe that this is true. In fact, what I see within these verses is that all disciples can take part in influencing those around them to seek God within their own lives.
2. This means that our young people should be aware of their ability to influence others to come to know the Lord. I have heard numerous stories of young people becoming Christians simply because a friend invited them to come to church and they were willing to come because they saw that the young person inviting them wasn't just some poser Christian, but that he or she was a true disciple who showed it in his or her actions. What better thing can a young person do than live in such a way that he or she is able influence a friend to obey the Lord? Surely we see just how special of a thing that would be, and it is my hope that as we pray for our young people that we are praying that they have success in doing that very thing. Lives can be changed through the influence of our example and that is true whether we are young or old. Let's pray that our young people get to feel the joy that comes from seeing such a thing within their own lives.

As our students head back to school this year, I'm sure they will constantly be on our minds and in our prayers. We'll be hoping and praying for their academic success. We'll be praying for their safety. We'll be praying that they make lots of friends and enjoy the advantages of their youth. However, let's also be praying that they excel in their spirituality. They have so much potential, and it is our job to try to bring that out of them while also praying that the Lord be active in their lives. Also for the students themselves...you now know what will be on your parent's and loved one's minds as they pray for you. Keep those things in mind and seek to make them a reality in your lives so that God will be praised and His kingdom will be strengthened through your efforts as young disciples.