

Teens - Why Are You Sent?

What kind of person drops their fishing nets - their livelihoods - and not only their source of income but ALSO THEIR DAD'S?! Then who ditches dad to go chasing waterfalls and stars and dreams with a homeless guru?

These guys. Teens.

Only teens are this crazy. Only teens are this unencumbered. Only teens are old enough to leave home but too young to be weighed down by the world.¹⁸

I was telling my daughter this week about the time a friend and I went exploring churches. It's where I learned about soul lights or eternal flames - lights or candles that are kept on all the time in a church. I was saying, "It was 3 a.m. and this particular church clearly had a fire going in one lantern - shouldn't we call the fire department?!"

But my daughter wasn't interested in church traditions and candles. She wanted to know - "What were you doing visiting churches at 3 in the morning?!"

And... uh... well... I answered, "Being a teen."

As a teen we're adults - but young adults. A 19 year old can buy alcohol. A 16 or 17 year old is permitted to risk their whole lives and join the armed forces. A 16 year old is permitted to risk the lives of others and drive a car. Teens are adults.

But teens are also kids at that age. Brains don't stop developing until they are 30. Teens are the time of growth spurts and first loves. Teens are the time of still growing your final teeth! And that combination of growing independence, youthful energy, youthful stupidity, lack of many responsibilities and lack of jadedness means...

At 18, you're out at 3 a.m. with your friend visiting 24-hour churches. And waiting on the donut shop to open at 4 a.m. Because why not? And you're climbing rock cliffs without ropes and exploring abandoned buildings. Yes. I did all that.

And like most teens, I *knew* a great destiny was unfolding in this time and this now. I *knew* if I wasn't the Chosen One, then surely someone in my group of friends were. Chosen for... what exactly? We didn't know. Saving the world was clearly part of it. We knew no one had ever lived in this years, and the entire world was open for our shaping. We'd been told since youth that "you are the future" and "you're the generation that will fix our wrongs and do better." I was so full of myself and so full of nothing and so full of idealistic dreams and values and so unaware of how little I knew.

I think this is the mindset of Andrew, James, Simon and John. I have heard convincing arguments Jesus' disciples are teens.

Luke tells us Jesus begins his ministry around age 30. This is a respectable age in ancient Jewish culture. 30 is no longer a young man, and neither is it old. It is the age a student can become a rabbi and begin to teach; and is the preferred age for a ruler. David becomes king at 30 (2 Samuel 5:4); Joseph enters Pharaoh's service at 30 (Genesis 41:46) and Levites began their priesthood at 30 (Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35). We know today from science that indeed, that's when your brain is mature.

A rabbi's disciples are those younger than them that are learning from the rabbi. So the 12 have to be under the age of 30.

Jewish culture then and now recognizes a child as an adult at 13. That is, "adult" in the same way we think of teens as adults. Young adults. Not mature like a 30-year-old, but not a child either. Before age 13, kids were expected to attend school, play around, be kids. All boys were taught, and still are to this day, to read enough to be able to read the Torah. Those boys who did well in school and wanted to focus a life on religion sought a rabbi for their secondary education. Then they followed that rabbi from age 13 to 30. At 30, they graduated to being a rabbi and chose their own disciples and the religion continued.

So Jesus' disciples, the 12 anyways, are between the ages of 13 and 29. Some are married - like Simon Peter (Matthew 8:14). Others are working with their dads - like James and John. We know many others - crowds - followed Jesus. Made of families, men and women, children and babies, teens and adults.

But these 12 guys called to follow? Teens. MAYBE in their 20s, MAYBE.

And that is why I think they're crazy enough to drop everything and go. A rabbi is choosing THEM. They sure weren't chosen at 13! And the rabbi is proclaiming good news and curing every disease and every sickness, traveling and teaching. Disciples of a rabbi follow close so they can learn to do as the rabbi does.

Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.

Follow me, and learn as I do, and you won't be catching just to survive today. You'll be gathering in people and offering them the bread of life and the cup of blessing.

Follow me, and I will send you out empowered to heal, to cure, to bless, to love.

These teens believe. These teens can dream and live into those dreams. And these teens helped change the world.

Teens today are doing the same. With passion, teens and twenties are leading the charge to end fossil fuels, and to live what we preach everywhere. To end hypocrisy. To be Christian in name and deed and life and values - not just wear a cross - and to not use the Bible as a weapon or prop.

CanadaHelps ran an article highlighting these teens and twenties:

Stella Bowles of Nova Scotia "first had her voice heard at 11-years-old when she discovered she couldn't swim in a river near her home because it contained sewage. In response, Stella Bowles decided to test the fecal bacteria in the water for her grade six science project and post her findings on her Facebook page devoted to that project. Not only did she discover the water was very contaminated, Stella learned that 600 sewage pipes were illegally dumping in the river. Her results on Facebook went viral, reaching policymakers from all three levels of government who jointly pledged 15.7 million dollars to clean up the river."

Or consider Vishal Vijay of Ontario - When Vishal was 10 his entire life changed when he witnessed extreme poverty first hand on a trip to Rajasthan, India. Most notably, Vishal, based in Oakville, Ontario, witnessed a young girl about his age who looked underfed and begging on the street. Vishal didn't understand how she could face extreme poverty when he didn't. After

arriving back home following another trip to India in 2012, Vishal and his younger brother, Ishan decided to spread the word about the injustices they witnessed. As they gained followers, they began a youth-run national non-profit organization they eventually called EveryChildNow, empowering kids to help other kids and provide children locally and globally with basic needs. Since then, they have raised over \$100,000 and collected over 30,000 worth of items and supplies to provide children living in extreme poverty.

And you know of the powerful strength of local leader Autumn Peltier. At age 12, Peltier gained national and international notice at a 2016 meeting of the Assembly of First Nations when she presented Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with a copper water pot and, although she did not have time to deliver her prepared speech, confronted Trudeau on his record on water protection and his support for pipelines. She said: "I'm very unhappy with the choices you made and broken promises to my people... I don't think he should have made that promise, because now I'm going to hold him accountable."

Teens of today are the people who have grown up in darkness. They are who have never known a world that isn't a fraction from environmental collapse. Young adults are those who were born after September 11. They've never known a world without militarization, Big-Brother-Like digital surveillance; or without huge wealth inequalities.

And yet - to them light is dawning. God chooses the people who know what kind of trouble we're in, and yet haven't given up, or lost the spark of hope and fire and passion and dreams. And God calls - Come, follow me, and we'll cure every disease and every sickness among all the people.

Do you feel your own hope stirring?

Can you hear Jesus is calling your name now?

What is he calling? To where is he asking us to follow him?

Are we crazy enough to believe him, drop everything, and go?

Or is that only for the young?

It is said we're only old when our memories outweigh our dreams.

I'm dreaming of a world of peace-making. A world where peace isn't kept with threat of war and violence, but peace is desired and cherished as a fragile egg we all tend to, hatch, and raise. Peace because of mutual understanding, positive relationships. Peace because I honest want the best for my neighbour and my neighbour wants the best for me. I am dreaming of shalom right now - wholeness, wellness, satiation, flourishing peace.

I'm dreaming of continuing to work towards bringing bell music here. And maybe comfortable chairs. Painted walls. Dreaming of our next VBS!

I'm dreaming of someday sitting under the walnut sprouts from the Edwards and those trees are big enough to be shade trees.

I'm dreaming of the social hour after service! Dreams don't have to be big.

As our Prime Minister said this week, "Nostalgia is not a strategy."

Jesus doesn't call these teens to follow him to recreate the Davidic kingdom that was, but to dream and live out into the new world.

Paul doesn't write to the church to tell them to nostalgically remember who baptized whom - and so who has the greatest spiritual clout. He tells them to knit themselves together, and be united in purpose, intent, dreams.

Dream together.

And live into that dream.

What are you dreaming now?

Where is God sending you physically or spiritually?

What is God's call upon your life that continues to beckon you all the days of your life?

Now, how do we knit these dreams together?

God is saying "Follow me, and cure, and heal."

May we be teens and say, "Yes!" and live into God's big dreams. **Amen.**

Scripture Readings – Jan. 25, 2026 – LCUCPC

Matthew 4:12-23 – NRSV Ue Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,

 on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—

¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,

and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸ As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People

²³ Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.



1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Divisions in the Church

¹⁰ Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you but that you be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ For it has been made clear to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹² What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God^[a] that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel—and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

¹⁸ For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **May God's spirit shape our understanding of these words.**

And may they awaken in our hearts