

## Understanding Teens and Young Adults

**INTRO:** The goal of this study is to give the disciple maker a starting point in the discipleship process. In a general sense the disciple maker is to help foolish and simple youths gain the wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord. Only God can change the heart of the fool. Nevertheless the disciple maker can help the disciple see his need for grace.

### General Characteristics of Teens and Young Adults<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Early Adolescence Characteristics: Grades 7-9/ Ages 12-15

##### A. Physically

1. He is growing rapidly.
2. Girls grow more rapidly than boys.
3. He is undergoing many internal bodily changes.
4. He is usually awkward.
5. He has boundless energy alternated with periods of fatigue.
6. He has a greater interest in privacy
7. He has a greater ability to work

##### B. Mentally

1. He has a keen memory.
2. He is interested in adventure and discovery.
3. He is capable of real thinking (moving toward the abstract).
4. He often will question authority.
5. He will make quick judgments.
6. He has an active imagination.
7. He has a strong sense of humor (wants to laugh).
8. He has improved abilities to use speech to express oneself.

##### C. Socially

1. He wants to be an adult.
2. He desires to be independent of adults.
3. He wants to belong to a "group".
4. He has a strong sense of loyalty.
5. He is usually self-conscious.
6. His social problems reflect his sexual development.
7. He is looking for a model - a hero.
8. Close friendships gain importance

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<sup>1</sup> Material adapted from *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Teaching* p. 133-135

9. Less affection is shown to parents, with occasional rudeness
10. Realization that parents are not perfect; identification of their faults
11. Search for new people to love in addition to parents

**D. Emotionally**

1. He often feels misunderstood by adults and peers.
2. His emotions fluctuate—extreme joy to sadness.
3. He lacks self-control of emotions.
4. His emotions are intense.
5. Tendency to return to childish behavior

**E. Spiritually**

1. He wants a faith that is practical—here and now.
2. His spirit is ripe for the Gospel message.
3. He has a vision for service—being needed to serve.
4. He can have many doubts about Christianity.
5. He is looking for the ideal (in thoughts and in people's actions).

**II. Middle Adolescence Characteristics: Grades 10-11/ Age 16-17**

**A. Physically**

1. He is outgrowing his awkwardness.
2. He has an attractive, grown-up appearance.
3. His appetite is usually great.
4. His physical habits are being formed.
5. He is usually concerned about his sexual nature.
6. He is extremely concerned with appearance and with one's body.

**B. Mentally**

1. His reasoning powers are reaching new heights.
2. He likes arguments and debate.
3. He is very creative and idealistic.
4. His judgment is improving.
5. His imagination is usually under the control of reason and judgment.
6. He is usually subject to suggestion.
7. Intellectual interests gain importance.
8. He has a greater capacity for setting goals.

**C. Socially**

1. He belongs to a clique or exclusive social group.
2. He is attracted to the opposite sex (though not always).
3. Tenderness and fears are shown toward opposite sex.
4. He is very much interested in personal traits and outward appearance.
5. He wants social approval.
6. He is trying to find his place in society.
7. He usually has an increasing desire to help others.
8. Complaints that parents interfere with independence.

9. He exerts effort to make new friends.

**D. Emotionally**

1. His emotions are still intense.
2. He now has more of an ability to control his emotions.
3. He may be moody.
4. He wants security.
5. He likes excitement and entertainment.
6. He is self-absorbed – alternating between unrealistically high expectations and poor self-concept.

**E. Spiritually**

1. His religion is personal.
2. His religion is one of action.
3. His religion is emotional.
4. His doubts may increase about his faith.
5. He can now appreciate the abstract and the atmosphere of worship.
6. There is a more consistent evidence of conscience.

**III. Late Adolescence Characteristics: Grades 12-College/ Age 18-19**

**A. Physically**

1. He is fully developed.
2. He is in prime physical condition.
3. He understands the limits of his endurance (ability to pace himself).

**B. Mentally**

1. He has the ability to think ideas through.
2. He has the ability to make independent decisions.
3. He has the ability to set goals and follow through.
4. He has a higher level of concern for the future.
5. He enjoys mental tasks.

**C. Socially**

1. He has a more developed sense of humor.
2. He has learned to compromise/negotiate.
3. He has a firmer identity.
4. He exhibits a greater concern for others.
5. He is concerned with serious relationships.

**D. Emotionally**

1. He can delay gratification.
2. He has the ability to express feelings in words.
3. He possesses greater emotional stability.

## E. Spiritually

1. He is capable of useful insights.
2. He wants to be a part of something that makes a difference.
3. He is capable of maintaining his own walk with God.

## General Characteristics of a Fool

### I. He despises wisdom and instruction.

- a. **Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- b. **Proverbs 1:22** How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

### II. He dishonors and disappoints parents and authority.

- a. **Proverbs 10:1** The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother.
- b. **Proverbs 15:5** A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.
- c. **Proverbs 15:20** A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.
- d. **Proverbs 17:25** A foolish son *is* a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

### III. He easily falls into moral temptation.

- a. **Proverbs 7:5-9** That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words. For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:

### IV. He has limited control over his emotions and anger.

- a. **Proverbs 12:16** A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent *man* covereth shame.
- b. **Proverbs 29:11** A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

### V. He has a worldly perspective regarding money.

- a. **Proverbs 17:24** Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth.
- b. **Proverbs 21:20** *There is* treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

- VI. He is not teachable and loves his sin**
- a. **Proverbs 12:15** The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.
  - b. **Proverbs 13:19** The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.
  - c. **Proverbs 14:16** A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.
  - d. **Proverbs 17:10** A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.
  - e. **Proverbs 26:11** As a dog returneth to his vomit, *so* a fool returneth to his folly.
  - f. **Proverbs 29:9** *If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no rest.
- VII. He uses his mouth to hurt others**
- a. **Proverbs 18:6** A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.
  - b. **Proverbs 18:7** A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul.
  - c. **Proverbs 20:3** *It is* an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.
  - d. **Proverbs 10:23** *It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

## General Characteristics of the Wise

- I. He Demonstrates Humility by Listening to Wisdom.**  
**Proverbs 2:1-2** My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding;
- II. He Declares Humility by Seeking Wisdom.**  
**Proverbs 2:3-4** Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures;
- III. He Depends on God as the only Source of Wisdom.**  
**Proverbs 2:5-8** Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.
- IV. He Delights in the Path of Wisdom.**  
**Proverbs 2:9-22** Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep

thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoyce to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked; Whose ways *are* crooked, and *they* froward in their paths: To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*, and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

**Conclusion:** This next generation of servant leaders must have “wisdom from above.” They cannot conjure up this wisdom from some force of their own will. This wisdom is available to those who live lives of humility. James reminds us that “heavenly” wisdom is grace enabled.

**James 4:6** Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.