

“Let the little children come to me” — The importance of young people in the rise of evangelical Christianity

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[0 : 0 0] to you all and to speak to you on the topic of the role of young people in the rise of evangelicalism. Several years ago, I was the speaker for a winter retreat at a 12th century castle in Austria. How's that for a great location for a retreat? I flew with Carolyn and our three kids from Canada. We had a great week celebrating Christmas with Christians from all over Europe, Schloss Middersal. My sister and her family came down from Poland and joined us. Afterwards, we drove back to Poland to spend time with them at their home in Łódź. And Łódź is pronounced just like it's spelled, L-O-D-Z. I always like saying the name of that city. There should be more cities in the world that begin with woo. Anyways, we were driving from down here in

Salzburg up to Łódź. Some weeks before this, I had been at work in my basement in Canada studying, reading a dense scholarly account of the evangelical awakening in the North Atlantic world in the 18th century. It was a book called The Protestant Evangelical Awakening. It's one of a trilogy of important books written by the historian Reg Ward. Very difficult to understand. Mark Noel once offered me \$10,000 to translate this book from English into English.

I've never before read a book so slowly, never before or since. I kept coming across towns with unpronounceable names in Central Europe. Towns I'd never heard of, but they were key centers for the emergence of evangelical revival in the modern world. This was a different story than I had been told. I had maps spread out all over the floor of my study in Saskatchewan as I tried to figure out the German and Polish name of towns in Silesia. Towns that were sometimes German lands, at other times they were Polish or Czech territory. Was G-L-O-G-A-U pronounced Gwagov or Glogov? And was Breslau really the same place as Bratwaw? Spelt, well never mind how it's spelled. I'm working at my map, my Michelin map of Poland, trying to get these places straight because they were hot spots in revival that broke out in 1708 and that began with the children and then slowly spread to the adults and soon extended along the length of the Oder River Valley from Germany to Slovakia. Now I knew all about the revival in

Northampton, Massachusetts that began among the young people in Jonathan Edwards Church in 1734 and spread up and down a different river valley, the Connecticut River Valley in New England.

But I didn't know about this earlier young people's revival in a very different river valley in Central Europe. I was particularly interested in a town deep in the south of Poland with the German name Teschen that seemed to become a focus for the revival. On my Michelin map I found a town on the Polish-Czech border that was named Czeschen. You can see the spelling there. Czeschen on the Polish side and Tesche Czeschen on the Czech side. At this point I had no idea how to pronounce this so I phoned my sister in Poland. Brenda, when I come to Austria and speak at the retreat this Christmas and then we drive back to Wuj with you, it looks like we crossed the border into Poland at a place spelt C-I-E-S-Z-Y-N.

[3 : 50] How do you pronounce it? I heard her say something like Czeschen into the phone and that was enough to confirm that I had the right place. So after Christmas I was going to cross the border and see the place itself that I had been reading about with the map spread out on my floor on the way to my sister's house in Wuj. I told Brenda there was a church I particularly wanted to see with her if it was still there. It's called the Jesus Church. Great name for a church. And it was where the uprising of the children in 1708 was, as Reg said in his book, baptized into the church. The Jesus Church actually became a nerve center of revival for Germans, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks. It was one of a handful of churches that the ruling Catholic dynasty at the time, the Habsburgs, had allowed the Protestants in the region to have. They allowed them a certain number of grace churches. Charles II had come down from Sweden.

There had been various battles. There had been a kind of settlement. They allowed them a certain number of grace churches that they could build if they raised the money themselves. So a pietist pastor parachuted in from Germany to oversee the Jesus Church. But soon the services attracted thousands, thousands more than could be accommodated. Some would walk all night to get there. They would start out the night before and walk all night in order to get to the church. Though the church held 5,000 people and had multiple balconies, services had to begin at 6 o'clock in the morning and continue all day in different languages in order to accommodate everyone. Great crowds gathered inside and outside the church. They passed their times in prayers and confessions and ardent hymn singing, waiting for their services and revival spreads to local towns and villages.

I wanted to see this church. And so I did with my sister in the last days of December that year. I found out that Teschen was divided down the middle in 1920 between Czechoslovakia and Poland.

And that is why it has two names today. Tesky-Teschen is Czech-Teschen. And then there's Polish-Teschen. The Jesus Church is still standing. And here it is when we visited it. It's still standing. It's was wonderful to see. After all these years, after the tumult of war, Auschwitz is only a few minutes away. The church still stands with a soaring broke tower, 72 meters high. I found a plaque on the church. And not this one. There's another plaque that told the same story I've been reading about earlier in my study in Canada of the uprising in children in 1708 and the revival that came to center on this church in Cheschen. It's wonderful to see it for myself. Well, I did a bit more research later when I got home to follow up on what I had learned. At the Bodleian Library in Oxford,

I had found a 41-page tract published in London in 1708. It has the long title, typical of the period.

[7 : 12] You get these long titles, Praise Out of the Mouths of Babes, or a Particular Account of Some Extraordinary Pious Motions and Devout Exercises Observed of Late in Many Children in Silesia.

I don't know what its ranking was on Amazon.com, but it's quite the title. The fourth particular account of some extraordinary pious motions reminded me of the style of Jonathan Edwards reporting a revival in New England and also later in Scotland, faithful narrative of a surprising work. Both of these were strange but true genres, you know, a faithful narrative of something quite remarkable. From the account of the children's revival in Europe, I learned about revival beginning with the children of Protestant parents who were not willing, like their elders, to be silenced or marginalized by the Catholic rulers. The children near Spratov, near Glogov, began to meet in the open fields outside the town at daybreak. And then again, two or three times a day, they would form circles and hold hands and pray together, sometimes laying prostrate on the ground.

They would be singing Lutheran hymns, some of the hymns of Paul Gerhardt. Paul Gerhardt is, O Sacred Head, Now Wounded, and so on. They'd read psalms, they'd read devotional texts, and so on, closing with a blessing. One Protestant father was so worried about the children doing this in defiance of the authorities that he tried to lock his son and daughter in their bedroom. When he heard that they were going to go climb out the window, he just relented down the pipe, he relented and let them go.

Soon the adults were gathering and forming a circle around the children. As the children were singing and praying, the adults were beginning to weep. At several of the towns to which this revival spread, there was as many as 300 children, and later one observer reported a thousand. The magistrates issued orders to desist, but the children wouldn't stop. At Friedberg, a hangman was sent with a whip to disperse the children who were meeting in the marketplace, but when he saw them at their prayers, these children at their prayers, he couldn't do it. At Breslau, some of the Roman Bratwab, some of the Roman Catholic children joined the Lutheran young people, despite strict orders from the magistrates to keep the, and for the parents, to keep their children at home. Still thousands looked on.

It's a remarkable uprising of the children in 1708. Let me just go through a few texts with you and let you see some of this. I'll just read some of this to give you the feel from the text.

[9 : 55] These religious exercises, so far as I've been able to learn, began at Spratov. And I've got a little blue circle there. At the top left, you can see where Spratov is. A town of the principality of Glaugov, and spread in a very short time through all the principalities of Silesia. And there's a river valley that the revival is following.

Then in a week's time, this motion spread over all five principalities of Silesia. Though some were locked up, they nevertheless used their utmost endeavors to meet the rest, and therefore, according to some letters, they leaped out of the windows and crept through the holes of the stoves. The children were determined, even when the parents were trying to keep them in.

The parents are quite worried. The tensions are high. This is like Northern Ireland, right? This is a Protestant-Catholic kind of tension. The beleaguered Protestant minority, they're not sure. But the children had watched the Swedish soldiers, when they were there, worship on parade outdoors, and they were mimicking the soldiers by praying outside. That's where they got the idea.

And then at Lignes, they were not suffered to go out of the city. They met in the marketplace. If they weren't allowed to go out of the city, they met right in the marketplace and performed there their prayers with an assurance uncommon in children.

They that do not pray, sorry, that they do not pray out of bare formality. These kids weren't just praying forms, but for a real reformation of their lives. That is a real renewal of their lives.

[11 : 26] And they encourage other people likewise. That they meet twice or thrice every day, sometimes very early before its light, and sometimes they continued at their devotions three hours, and according to some information, it's five hours. This is a person reporting in England the news that he'd received, the news, the intelligence of this revival. The executioner being sent to disperse them, finding them preying upon their faces, went back with tears in his eyes and told his superiors he could do them no harm because they did nothing but pray. The kind of powerlessness of these children, and he can't do anything about it. That very raw people, as country fellows and soldiers, looking on their devotions, were powerfully affected and moved even to shed tears. It's beginning to spread to the adults. That many aged and grown people have been reclaimed, so that they resort no more to the places of drinking and of vain diversion, showing since that time several signs of a sincere reformation attended with other good motions. These are the sorts of things that are being reported about the uprising of the children.

This, then, was the young people's revival. This was the young people's revival that was baptized into the church at Cheshen. It spreads to the adults, and it goes from the children to the adults, and it becomes centered at that Jesus church in Cheshen. It is channeled, it's canalized by Protestant pastors into a whole regional renewal movement. And this is the movement that led ultimately to the erection of this Jesus church that I saw for myself a few years ago. The story doesn't end here, though. Some of the Protestants in Moravia, nearby Moravia, which would be sort of over here. Some of the Protestants in Moravia, inspired by the revival at Cheshen, grew weary of the economic and religious persecution that they were living under, and they fled as refugees east to Saxony, into German territory. They found safe harbor on the estate of a pious nobleman. They'd heard that there was a religious nobleman where you could kind of find sanctuary. His name was Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf, who established a village for them on his property. They christened it Herrnhut, the Lord's Watch.

And soon a fresh revival broke out among these religious refugees in 1727, beginning again with the children, the pious children praying all night on the Huttberg, on the little mound, and began with the children and spread to the adults, and they had a kind of quasi-Pentecostal moment in 1727.

And then under Zinzendorf's leadership, this movement was molded into the renewed Moravian brethren. And it was among these same Moravian brethren in London in 1738 that John Wesley said he found his heart strangely warmed at a meeting in Aldersgate Street, and it was instrumental in his revival. So do you see the kind of knock-on effect of what's happening? So we can connect the dots.

Dot one, the uprising of the children in Lower Silesia in 1708. Dot two, the revival at Cheshan that follows. Dot three, the renewed Moravian brethren at Herrnhut in 1727. Dot four, if you like, John Wesley's Aldersgate experience and the rise of Methodism in 1738. Let me see if I can just go through this again. This is from Spratav to Glogov or Breslau down to Cheshan. And then you have all these different nationalities and people, some people walking all night to come to the revival services, services that center at Cheshan. And then you have from Cheshan, you got some of these Moravian refugees from Moravia. They end up in Upper Lusatia in Saxony on the estate of Count Zinzendorf at, at, at Herrnhut. And then from there, there are missionaries and there's a kind of Moravian diaspora that head out and they end up soon, Moravian missionaries are the first ones, first

[15 : 44] Protestant missionaries to go to Greenland, to go to South Africa, to go to the West Indies, to go to the Carolinas, to go to Pennsylvania. So from these humble beginnings, all this, all this follows.

Let me just show you a few more pictures, then I'll come back to the narrative. Back in 2007, I was on sabbatical and we were going to be going to Europe and I had John Wesley's journal open in one hand and then Google Earth and my mouse in the other hand. And I was kind of tracing John Wesley's journey after his conversion in 1738 when he went to visit Herrnhut. He wanted to visit the site of all this godliness. He wanted to see the site where all this had begun. And this basically is his journey. So we went to Prague and rented a van and then did it in reverse. And we, we did this in reverse and kind of followed the path of the refugees from the uprising of the children and, and on through. I want to do something related to my research, but that I could still hold my kids' attention. They were pretty little. I think Sam thought of it as a journey from brat verse to Dutch pancakes.

But, you know, we, we, we, we did it. We did, we did the journey. And so we, if you like, from west to east, it's John Wesley's pilgrimage. But from east to west, it's the path of Moravian expansion in, in these years.

And here is Herrnhut, the Moravian village I just talked about from the Hootberg, where the children had been praying all night behind the burial ground. This is the typical Moravian burial ground.

And this is in the distance, Bertelsdorf. It's just a little walk down an avenue of trees from Herrenhut. And this is where the church service, where the refugees gathered. And in 1727, a new kind of renewal movement had broken out. It's a very beautiful village at the, the, the prayer hall, Moravian prayer hall. All roads kind of lead to the center, to this prayer hall at the center of, of Herrenhut.

[17 : 52] But by the 1740s, there's a spiritual awakening that is general across the North Atlantic world. So we talk about the Protestant evangelical awakening or the rise of evangelicalism.

People often use the language of work. It seems like there's a work of God. There's something that God's doing. And it seemed like it was concentrated in time and extended in space.

And what was happening in London, was happening in Northampton, Massachusetts, was happening in Silesia. Right? And there was one general sense of awakening. And what we're looking at, our particular angle, is just to look at this from the point of view of, of the, the young people.

What's happening in terms of the young people. Now the story is more complex than I'm narrating. There are other tap roots for the rise of evangelical religion in the North Atlantic in the 18th century.

There's the fervor of the long communion season in Scots-Irish piety that fed into revival in Western Scotland and among immigrants in the middle colonies in America. There's a New England Puritan tradition of continuous community renewal and revival that is the background to Jonathan Edwards' revivals in Northampton.

[19 : 03] There's a mix of Anglican and non-conformist traditions in England that would contribute to the revival there. But still, the Central European tap roots, the story we've just told out of Central Europe, is important too.

And it's a story that I didn't know until a few years ago and that we're just beginning to learn the story and to pronounce the names. In May 2005, I was back at Teschen again.

This time I was lecturing to a group of Polish, Czech, and Slovakian youth workers. My sister and her husband worked for a mission organization called Josiah Venture, which partners with nationals in several countries in Central and Eastern European countries.

There was a banner up in the room that I lectured in for the first two days. It announced that these youth workers were united in praying for, a movement of God among the youth of Eastern Europe that finds its home in the local church and transforms society.

It's a great mission. They were praying for, working towards, a movement of God among the youth of Eastern Europe that finds its home in the local church and transforms society.

[20 : 12] The national leaders I was speaking to, and many of them were young people in their 20s, were running organizations all on their own in their countries.

It's like everybody I was talking to had their own organization they were running. Almost all of them had the name Brethren in it too somewhere. They were the children during the Velvet Revolution and the Solidarity Movement, but now they were working with young people and seeing a significant spiritual awakening.

It was my privilege to lecture to them about renewal movements in the history of the church, and one of the movements I wanted to tell them about and I didn't know, and by taking coals to Newcastle, do you guys know the story of the renewal movement that happened right here on your doorstep?

And they didn't. And I was able to tell them, in the very towns and cities where they were working today, evangelical renewal had begun among young people 300 years earlier.

And I asked, could I tell you the story of the uprising of the children in the Jesus Church itself? So we went to the Jesus Church, and I was able to lecture to these young people, these youth workers in the Jesus Church, and tell them the story.

[21 : 20] In this group were two youth workers who were running a weekly junior high Bible study in Chesham itself. Historians speak of upstate New York in the 19th century as a burned-over district, since revivals seem to come and recur so frequently in the region.

I was beginning to wonder if Silesia and Moravia were in their own way kind of burned-over districts in this period seeing renewal. Well, it's been about 300 years since the founding of the Jesus Church at Chesham, since this renewal.

There was an academic conference at the Silesian University in Poland in honor of this a few years ago. But I think it's a good time for us to just pause to remember the important place of young people in the Church, past and present.

Young people were crucial in early America, too. During the Great Awakening, local revival began first among the young people in, I could go on and on, but in Elizabethtown, Boston, Bridgewater, Lime, New Concord, Philadelphia, Ipswich, Woodstock, East Hampton, several other places, before it spread to the adults.

Let me just give you a couple examples from around the Boston area from this Christian history magazine published by Thomas Prince in 1743. I just went through.

[22 : 47] It's on Google Books. You can find it. And you can go through his account, and I just put in young people. There's like 37 hits. And you can go through and read about what's happening.

And so here, this first one is Reverend Mr. Peabody, a pastor at Natick near Boston in July 1743. He reports to the magazines, there have been observable strivings of the ever-blessed spirit on the hearts of many, especially young people, in convincing and enlightening, and I hope converting them, in my neighboring towns, as in Medfield, Dedham, Needham, Medway, and Sherbourne, etc., where the ministers have been lively and faithful.

And he talks then, again, about among my little people, he says too. Or again, here in Renton, Massachusetts, 28 miles southwest of Boston, in March 1741, he talks about the young people.

He said, they began to lament their own cases to one another. There's a sense of grief for their sins. They're entering into soul trouble. It was very agreeably surprising almost daily to hear of new instances of young persons, for the work of God's spirit seemed to be chiefly on young people, the work that they're in great concern, what they should do to be saved.

The same thoughtfulness seemed to run from house to house and from soul to soul, and their complaints against themselves were very much the same. And then, here again, another situation in Bridgeport.

[24 : 15] This is John Porter, who was converted by Whitfield, the minister there, and he talks about a revival in Bridgeport that begins with the young people, and he said, this was the grand and important question in the mouths of most of my people, especially young people.

What must we do to be saved? Salvation now seemed to be the main concern of their souls and the main business of their lives. So not just in Eastern Europe, the story is the same here as well.

So we could look at other case studies. Many of the preachers themselves in the evangelical revival were young people in their 20s, like the Czech leaders I met in 2005.

The most famous preacher of all in the 18th century, George Whitfield, was called the boy preacher. He was a young man when he began preaching. Small groups of praying children simulated revival, not just in Silesia, but among Baptists in Northampton and England as among Congregationalists in Northampton in New England.

So just briefly, here's two case studies of young people in Old and New England. Jonathan Edwards makes a big deal out of, he's the first one to really narrate revival in his faithful narrative of a surprising work of God in the conversion of some 300 souls.

[25 : 38] I told you, you always get these long titles, right? And he tells the story of what's happening among the young people. He said, just after my grandfather's death, Solomon Stoddard had been the pastor there, his grandfather, it seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion.

It seemed like people were just dead spiritually. Licentiousness, immorality, for some years prevailed among the youth in the town. And there were many of them very addicted to night walking and frequenting the tavern and lewd practices wherein some, by their example, exceedingly corrupted others.

And the, I mean, the language is quaint. He talks about their mirth and jollility and what they call their frolics, that they would spend the greater part of the night in them and so on. But if you dig in behind us a little bit, here's what's going on.

You've got a whole new youth culture happening in western Massachusetts and in a place like Northampton because earlier there was open land and the land was given to younger sons that as the sons came of age they would be able to get land.

All the land had been used up. So young people are staying home longer and marrying later. On average, they're marrying three or four years later than their parents had. The men are marrying on average at age 28 or 29.

[27 : 01] The women at about age 25. And so you actually have a culture of adolescents and restless young people and it develops a whole party culture. And the New England practice of bundling was well known.

And this is where it was kind of a courtship thing that the parents kind of winked at and let go but where young people, a man and a woman, would spend the night together sort of bundled in bed together in blankets.

But how successful this was as a courting ritual is shown by the fact that 10% of firstborn children in Northampton were born eight months after their parents were married.

But there's a culture of extended adolescence and a culture, a party culture. There's a party culture and the young people are restless, they're indulging, there's sexually immoral practices going on and that's the kind of culture that Edwards is worried about.

But he says two or three years later there began to be a sensible amendment. The young people showed more and more of a disposition to hearken to counsel. They left off this kind of party culture, these frolics.

[28 : 10] They began to attend meetings. Then there was a death among one of the young people and this often happens in these narratives. Somebody dies, something serious happens. Same thing happened in old England, in Northampton in another community.

Somebody dies and the young people get serious. They were very much affected, he said, the young people. This was followed by another death of a young married woman who had been considerably exercised in her mind and worried about the salvation of her soul.

And soon the young people are gathering and they're having their own meetings together and they are coming along to church in a whole different spirit.

And he narrates how this, he said, there's a concern about the things of religion that spreads, becomes universal in all parts of the town, among all persons, of all degrees, and of all ages.

And he says, whereas the tavern used to be where they'd hang out, now they're hanging out at the minister's house. And he tells the story. That's one sort of case study.

[29 : 15] The second one is Northampton in England, a less well-known case, is John Ryland Jr., one of the key leaders in the renewal of the Baptist denomination in the 18th century, a great promoter of missions, the backer of William Carey and the Baptist Missionary Society and the early experiments in home missions, a great educator at Bristol, a really important evangelical leader in the later 18th century, even though he looks a little grumpy and hung over in this picture.

In the Angus Library, the Baptist Library in Oxford, I found a manuscript of his conversion narrative and another one called An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Two Societies at Mr. Ryland's and Mrs. Trinder's Boarding School in Northampton, drawn up by John Ryland Jr.

and what it is, this is really an account of a kind of boys club and a girls club that they had founded all on their own at a boarding school in Northampton in the English Midlands and the senior Ryland was a minister, John Collett Ryland.

He's a Baptist pastor and he's got a boarding school and Mrs. Trinder has another boarding school but what happened is John Ryland Jr., again, he's about 13 years of age and he's talking to one of the boys and he finds out that a few of them are meeting together on their own to pray and that they have a kind of religious society, a kind of club and again, a member of the community died suddenly and soon, there's about 22 boys that over the four years that passed through this club, there's very high standards of admission, he names the members, they actually excommunicate people, they excommunicated to a guy named John Fauntleroy and then they write his name in Greek characters and it's like, they're after in the journal, it's like they're writing him out of the journal and then John Young, it said he re-backslid, he didn't just backslide, he re-backslid, they say in the journal and so on and at one level, this is kind of like a secret boys club and a secret girls club, there's an in group and an out group but on the other hand, they're undergoing life-changing spiritual experiences together and this is our first chance to actually see not just the adults talking about the kids but this is the kids talking in their own words in this journal.

They're having life-changing spiritual experience, they're testing their gifts, they're narrating their experiences, they're practicing church and a number of them who go on to be key leaders of the next generation.

[31 : 55] Since Philip Ari's Centuries of Childhood, there's been a debate among historians of the family about the extent to which youth or adolescence existed as a stage in the life cycle in this period in early modern Europe.

Is there such a thing as adolescence? And if there is, they think it's gathering, the idea of adolescence is forming around things like courtship, apprenticeship and clubs.

And so I find it really interesting that in the emergence of a youth culture both in Northampton and Old England and here, making the transition from childhood to the responsibilities of adulthood, it looks like right at the center of that is spiritual experience and is a kind of spiritual and religious form of an adolescent culture right there at the heart of and at the beginning of the rise of evangelical religion.

Roman Catholic theologians speak of religious orders, monastic orders, forming around a founding charism that the Holy Spirit raised up each religious institute for a specific purpose to serve the church and they've got a reason for being.

Is there a founding charism, a gift of the Holy Spirit in the rise of evangelical religion, the rise of evangelicalism in this period? I think there are many features of evangelical renewal that could be identified.

[33 : 13] There's lots of things we could talk about that I think is God's gift through this movement to the church, what the Holy Spirit is doing. But one of the things is I think reminding us of the importance of young people in the life of the church.

Evangelicalism from its beginning has been a young people's movement, a dynamic movement with the energy, the restlessness, the idealism that the word movement suggests. It's been a movement of and for the rising generation.

A friend of mine who's been in youth ministry all his life speaks regularly to teenagers and he tells them, you are not the church of tomorrow, you're the church of today. The neo-evangelical movement in America since the 1930s has been characterized by a tremendous energy for youth work and student organizations and post-war organizations like Youth for Christ and Young Life and InterVarsity and so on.

There's been a tremendous interest in youth work. It shows no signs of changing anytime soon. Around the world today where the church is growing the most rapidly, it appears that evangelical forms of Christianity are taking root again among the rising generation.

Philip Jenkins reminds us half the world's population is under 24 years of age and 90% of these young people are in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. If the church will thrive in the 21st century, it will have to be as a young people's movement.

[34 : 38] Finally, just to conclude, in Matthew 19, as in the passage that was read for us in Luke 18, the parallel text, Jesus rebukes the disciples for hindering the children, saying, let the children come to me.

Whether in Silesia in 1708 or Malawi or Vancouver in 2015, Jesus continues, I think, to say this same thing to the church.

It's been one of the enduring strengths of the evangelical movement that it has taken this so seriously. If we take a look at that passage in Luke 18, we find that people are bringing the children to Jesus and he's saying, let them through.

Let them come to me. And he touches them and he prays for them and he says, to such as these belong the kingdom of heaven. In our church at St. John's, we want our young people to have the four blessings of this passage.

The presence of Jesus, let them come to me. He touches them, the touch of Jesus. The blessing of Jesus that he prays for them and the kingdom of Jesus.

[35 : 55] In this, our young people at this church too can be a model for all of us for to such as these belongs the kingdom of heaven. Just two words of exhortation and I'm done. Young people, if you put yourself in that category, this is the season of life for ideals.

Young people should be idealistic. It should be a little bit extreme. It's interesting that this passage is about little children and it's followed immediately by the rich young ruler.

And the rich young ruler is challenged to sacrifice everything. To be idealistic. To give it up. Leave it all in the field. Young people, this is the season for ideals.

Can you show the rest of us what it means to be entirely, radically, wholeheartedly committed to Jesus Christ? Nothing held back. Can you show us what it looks like to be a Holocaust offering, a whole offering of God of all you are and all you have and all you hope for?

Anything, Lord. Anytime, Lord. anywhere, Lord, at any cost. God has worked among young people time and time again and we pray for his work and his blessing on you.

[37 : 10] Older people, the rest of us, two things in this passage, bring them to Jesus and don't hinder them. What can we do to help bring young people to Jesus and not to hinder them even here in our own church?

Let's be those who bring our children in this church to Jesus, who support them, encourage them, pray for them, for the Sunday school ministry, for the CTC ministry, for the high school ministry, for the Ecclesia ministry.

Let's also be children at heart. Jesus says, such as these, people who are like children, to them belongs the kingdom and let's learn from our own children and from their ideals.

And don't be surprised if as God renews and refreshes our church, he begins with our young people, he's certainly done it this way before. Amen.