

# Youth: Ours but Once

by Russell DeLong

---

*Youth is a precious and fleeting period that sets the foundation for the rest of life, and it's crucial to make the most of it by forming good habits, actualizing ideals, and cultivating vision.*

**Topics:** "Youth Ministry", "Stewardship"

---

## Description

Russell DeLong emphasizes the importance of youth, highlighting how this period sets the foundation for habits, awakening, formation of ideals, vision, and creative genius. He stresses the significance of making the most of youth by molding, training, cultivating, and using it wisely, as it greatly impacts middle and old age. DeLong urges the congregation not to squander or waste their youth, but to give themselves to the best, especially to Christ, the Ideal of Ideals, in order to have a purposeful middle age and a blissful old age.

---

## Transcript

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 11: 9; 12: 1; I Timothy 4: 12

Someone has suggested that it is a shame that youth should be squandered on young people who have insufficient experience to use it wisely.

Youth is priceless and golden. It passes all too rapidly. It is gone before one can appraise

its worth accurately. Then one looks back with sickening dismay and disappointed ambitions to the one period in life that could have made a difference in all succeeding stages. Middle age and old age can never affect youth. But what one is in youth makes all the difference to middle and old age.

Time travels in one direction. Youth first -- then it is gone forever; middle age next; finally old age.

Why is youth so all-important?

First, it is the period of habit formation. Psychologists inform us that 98 per cent of all of

our acts are those of habit. Personal habits are formed before one is twenty, and professional before one is thirty. These mold and set the remaining years of our lives. Therefore it is imperative that good habits be formed.

Second, youth is a period of awakening. Physically one "grows up." Awkwardness

produces self-consciousness. With this comes a social awakening -- and a mental stirring which leads to such questions as: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I living? Where am I going? Following such always comes a spiritual awakening.

To be awake means to be conscious. To be conscious means to be active -- and to be active means to make decisions -- and decisions are made in the light of one's ideals, be they good or bad.

Third, youth is the period of the formation of ideals. We grow morally to the extent to which we actualize our ideals. In fact, moral value or one's character is the degree to which one has turned his ideals into personal reality.

Nothing is more important in youth than that the proper heroes and heroines, who are the embodiment of the highest ideals, are placed before our young people.

Fourth, youth is the period of vision. The Bible declares, "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." Here is the dividing line between youth and old age. Dreams are made up of past experiences; visions are composed of future possibilities. Age looks backward; youth looks forward. And it is not always a matter of biology. Some men of seventy are young; they see bigger and better things ahead. Some men of twenty are old; they lack vision.

Fifth, youth is a period of creative genius. In every field of life, masterpieces are either produced by young men or their foundation is laid in youth. Great old men have usually been great young men.

Agassiz, the great naturalist, was a professor at Harvard at twenty-five.

Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone at twenty-five.

Galileo discovered the law of the vibration of the pendulum at eighteen, was a professor at twenty-five.

Joan of Arc led the armies of France at eighteen.

William Jennings Bryan became a member of Congress at thirty-one.

Alexander had conquered the world at thirty-two.

Oliver Cromwell became a member of Parliament at twenty-nine, Gladstone at twenty-three, and Pitt at twenty-one. He also became chancellor of the exchequer at twenty-three and prime minister at twenty-five.

Abraham Lincoln entered the Illinois legislature at twenty-five and Congress at thirty-eight.

Alexander Hamilton wrote the Constitution at thirty and became Secretary of the Treasury at thirty-two.

Napoleon was commander of the armies of Italy at twenty-seven and emperor of France at thirty.

Theodore Roosevelt was President at forty-three.

Isaac Newton, professor of mathematics at twenty-seven.

Robert Maynard Hutchins, dean of Yale Law School at twenty-five and president of the University of Chicago at thirty.

Berkeley, the great idealist, wrote his principal work at twenty-five.

William Cullen Bryant wrote "Thanatopsis" at nineteen; Robert Burns, his first volume of poems at twenty-seven; Lord Byron, at nineteen; Charles Dickens, at twenty-four; Shakespeare, at twenty-nine; and Tennyson, at eighteen.

Caruso was acclaimed at twenty-five, Galli Curci at twenty, Fritz Kreisler at thirteen, Paderewski at eighteen, Schumann-Heink at seventeen.

Raphael frescoed the walls of the Vatican at twenty-five, and John Singer Sargent exhibited his masterpieces at twenty-one.

John Calvin wrote his famous Institutes at twenty-seven, Martin Luther became professor of philosophy at twenty-five, and David Livingstone began his career in Africa at twenty-seven.

Henry Dunster became president of Harvard at twenty-eight; Elisha Williams, of Yale at thirty-two.

Disraeli published "Vivian Grey" at twenty-two; and Shelley, "Queen Mab" at twenty-one.

Macaulay, Carlyle, Scott, Webster, Bok, Westinghouse, Burbank, Eastman, Ford, Edison, Wright brothers, Woolworth, Rockefeller, Schwab, Heinz, and Gilbert all did the work for which they are remembered before they were thirty-five.

Youth is a time for preparation, for good habit formation, for visions, and for creative genius.

Don't squander it. Don't waste it.

Mold it.

Train it.

Cultivate it.

Use it.

James Allen said pertinently and pointedly: "You are today where your thoughts have

brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you. You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration."

Give yourself to the best.

Give your best to Christ, the Ideal of the Ideals.

He said, "Come, follow Me, and I'll make you."

Use your youth so that your middle age can be useful and your old age can be blissful.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/russell-delong/youth-ours-but-once/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**