

# WHAT?

*Teenagers in the Bible?*

The Bible's Teens Speak to Teens Today



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# Dedication

This book is dedicated to my sons, Matthew and Mark,  
because of their unconditional love for me,  
and their understanding as I took time at the computer to write;  
and  
to my students at South Bay Lutheran High School  
in Inglewood, California,  
because of their encouragement  
and the way they would catch my excitement  
as I talked about God's word.

May you all come to enjoy  
the people in the Bible  
as much as I do,  
and learn from them how  
to enjoy the Lord.



# Special Thanks to . . .

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The teen years—what a great time of life, but what a weird time of life as well. If we looked way back through history, I think we would find that teens throughout the ages have always tried to express their independence through their dances, clothing, and sayings. Just peak at the past thirty years or so to see just how much your wonderful age group has affected society.

Teenagers in the 1960's were doing a dance called "The Go-Go" and were wearing thigh-level go-go boots, white lipstick, and flowered pants. Teens in the 70's wore afros or ironed hairstyles, polyester bell-bottoms, letterman jackets, wallabee shoes or platforms as they danced "The Hustle" or "The Bump" in a disco. In the 80's, teens danced "The Electric Slide" in skin-tight jeans. The 90's found teenagers dancing "The Lambada," "The Macarena," "The Totsy Roll," and "The Butterfly" in baggy, unisex clothes that are open in select places to show their tattoos or body piercings.

And what about teen language? When adults said something was "good" in the 1960's, teens said it was "cool". In the 70's, "good" was "bad"; in the 80's, "good" was "fresh," and in the 90's, "good" was "all that," "off the hook," or "the bomb". Descriptions of the negative were no less confusing. When adults said something wasn't

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nice, 60's teens said that was "a bad scene"; 70's teens called it "messed up"; 80's teens felt "dis-ed"; and 90's teens simply "didn't go there".

Shock value seems to drive your fads from generation to generation. The secret teenage creed must go something like this:

On my honor, I will try; To be as different from adults as is humanly possible. If adults like what I'm doing, THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH IT!

But fads must change. Teenagers eventually become adults and you, as the upcoming teens, have to come up with different hair styles, fashion trends, dances, even vocabulary, in an effort to find out who you really are.

Yes, the teen years are a weird time of life. You're too old to be treated like a little kid, yet you're too young to have any real freedom. When the note the choir soprano hits strikes you funny in church, someone is quick to shoot a frown at you and warn, "Stop acting like a child." Then, when you have some great input for the discussion around the Thanksgiving table, you're cut short with the words, "Children should be seen and not heard." What are you supposed to do? Who are you supposed to be?

You, like thousands of teens everywhere, are asking that question daily. You are searching—searching for your identity and your independence. Your other favorite questions all begin with the word, "Why?" and your favorite response to any rule is, "Why not?"

Perhaps you have tried asking other people for answers to these questions about yourself. You may have talked it over with your friends, sisters or brothers, or—wonder of wonders—your parents or some other adult. If you have, I'm willing to bet that you received as many different answers as people you asked.

The advice you get from people reflects how they feel about you and about teenagers in general. I recently found out just how wide of a variety of opinions about teenagers exists among adults I know. Here are some of the answers I got when I asked them to complete this sentence: Teenagers are . . .

## Chapter 1

Boisterous  
Confused  
Easy  
Energetic  
Excessive  
Exuberant  
Fake  
Free-spirited  
Frustrated  
Hopeful  
Indecisive  
Irritating  
Loud  
More intelligent than they seem

Observant  
Overbearing  
Pressured  
Put down  
Shameless  
Silly  
Spontaneous  
Stereotyped  
Strong-willed  
Sweet  
Unappreciated  
Ungrateful  
Weak

As you can see, there are about an equal amount of positive and negative comments about teens, depending upon your understanding of what each word means. How would you complete the statement? Be honest. Take a moment now to think of ten words or short phrases you would use to complete the same sentence: Teenagers are . . .

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

As you embark upon or continue your search for who you are supposed to be, I'd like you to use this book to help you see yourself in a new way. I want you to see yourself not as adults see you,

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not as the media, the government, or any establishment sees you. I'd like you to see yourself as God sees you.

God created you. It was His idea to make the life cycle turn in such a way that everyone who makes it to age 20 must pass through Teenagerville—the ages of 13 through 19. You arrive at the gates of Teenagerville right around your 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. At the gates, it seems as though you receive certain characteristics (traits, qualities, attributes). Your task during your journey through town, which will end on your 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, is to master the correct use of these characteristics. If you figure out their correct use, you exit Teenagerville as a well-balanced young adult, well on your way to emotional and spiritual maturity. If you misuse them—well, let's just say that you could get very used to the term “dysfunctional”.

This book will explore 14 mostly negative characteristics commonly used to describe you as a teenager. Surprisingly, teenagers in the Bible had to struggle with these same years of confusion and I'm sure they had the same questions about identity that you now have. They had opportunities to use or misuse the same qualities you deal with. (After all, King Solomon did say, “There is nothing new under the sun” Eccl. 1:9 (NIV).)

Some of these teens made the wrong choices and the negative characteristic caused them all sorts of trouble. Other Bible teens made the right choices and turned their negative teen reputation into a positive trait they were able to carry with them into adulthood.

So, as you read, I'd like for you to focus on three things. First, notice the many different ways these Bible teenagers were just like you and your friends. Second, watch how these Bible teens handled their unique situations. Finally, ask yourself how you can make the Bible teens' positive traits part of your own life.

Now, I'd like to introduce you to some Bible teens who are remarkably just like you.