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2700-PLUS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS (Y-Z-TOPICS)
Compiled and Arranged Topically by Duane V. Maxey

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YOUNG PEOPLE

- 2701 -- A TUMBLEWEED? OR, AN OAK?

Would you rather be a tumbleweed or an oak in your influence on others? That's the question posed by Galen Anderson, who wrote, "A man's life is like either the tumbleweed or the oak tree. Some people just grow like the weed. They are of no value in their youth, and as the years of life come they break loose and become a blotch on society. They have no useful purpose in life -- just drifters. Their loved ones will mourn their loss, but society will not miss them. Then there are those whose lives are like the oak. They have turned from the frivolity of this life and have invested in things that have genuine worth. Their influence for good will live on in the lives of others after they are gone. Their death is noticed because their lives were spent bettering the nation and the community. They will be missed.

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YOUNG PEOPLE

2702 -- GOOD ADVICE IN A YOUNG MAN'S DARK HOUR

Charles William Eliot (1834-1926), former president of Harvard University, had a birthmark on his face that bothered him greatly. As a young man, he was told that surgeons could do nothing to remove it. Someone described that moment as "the dark hour of his soul."

Eliot's mother gave him this helpful advice: "My son, it is not possible for you to get rid of that hardship.... But it is possible for you, with God's help, to grow a mind and soul so big that people will forget to look at your face."

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YOUNG PEOPLE

2703 -- GROWING UP VERSES GIVING UP

I never had to give up playing with tops and marbles. I never had to come to the place where I said, "Oh I am a big boy now, and big boys shouldn't play marbles. So I will make a great effort to give up playing marbles." It did not happen that way.

One day I was playing marbles with a group of small boys and some older boys came by. They looked at me and said, "Hey, kid, can you field a ball?" "Sure I can," I replied with more vigor than accuracy. "Well," they said, "we are short a fielder. Get out there and see what you can do." I went out and was ready to play my head off to keep up with the older fellows. When it was my turn to bat I was ready to swing till I burst, and to run till I dropped, and do all that I could to keep up with the bigger company I was in. And when the game was over and we older boys, as I then classed myself, walked down the street past the little fellows who were playing marbles, I did not go back to marbles. I had graduated. I did not give up marbles, marbles gave me up. -- Donald Grey Barnhouse

It is certainly true that the more "grown up" and mature one is spiritually, the less trouble he, or she, will have in letting loose of the "marbles" and "bobbles" of spiritual infancy. -- D.V.M.

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YOUNG PEOPLE

2704 -- LEARNING TO GO FIRST TO GOD

It is wonderful if young people learn to seek counsel from God first. They should never fear to do so. It can save them needless sorrow and regret throughout their lives. It is always foolish to make major decision without seeking wise counsel:

The folly of human nature is neatly summed up by the case of the middle-aged school teacher who invested her life savings in a business enterprise which had been elaborately explained to her by a swindler.

When her investment disappeared and the wonderful dream was shattered, she went to the office of the Better Business Bureau. "Why on earth," they asked, "didn't you come to us first? Didn't you know about the Better Business Bureau?"

"Oh, yes," said the lady sadly, "I've always known about you. But I didn't come because I was afraid you'd tell me not to do it."

It is far better to hear and to heed God's wise counsel to not do a thing than to suffer the consequences of failing to do so.

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YOUNG PEOPLE

2705 -- STARTING RIGHT AND PLOWING STRAIGHT

Dr. M. R. De Haan told the story of how his uncle taught him to plow years ago. He said, "I watched him start preparing the ground. First he would make a 'back furrow' in the middle of the field. If this row was straight, all the others would fall in line. Finally the time came for me to try my hand at the task. I had often seen him go across the field as straight as an arrow. So I asked him the secret of his success. He replied, 'Never let your gaze wander from a fixed goal. Just look straight ahead.' Then, giving me the reins, he said, 'I'll stand at the other end and you keep your eye on me at all times.'" That is also the secret of the victorious Christian life: Keep looking to Jesus.

Follow the Lord no matter what it costs, Christian. Never waver, but by His grace go on "plowing a straight furrow."

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YOUNG PEOPLE -- HONOR TO PARENTS

2706 -- A "MEMORIAL DAY" FOR MOTHERS

Did you know that the idea for Mother's Day was born in a small Methodist church in Grafton, West Virginia?

It was 1876 and the nation still mourned the Civil War dead. While teaching a Memorial Day lesson, Mrs. Anna Reeves Jarvis thought of mothers who had lost their sons. She prayed that one day there could be a "Memorial Day" for mothers. The prayer made a deep impression on one of Mrs. Jarvis's eleven children. Young Anna had seen her mother's efforts to hold the war-split community and church together. As she grew into adulthood, the younger woman kept Mrs. Jarvis's

dream in her heart. On the day of her mother's death, Anna was determined to establish Mother's Day in her honor.

On May 12, 1907, a local observance was held which later spread to Philadelphia. By 1910, Mother's Day was celebrated in forty-five states, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Canada, and Mexico. Elated, Miss Jarvis told a friend, "Where it will end must be left for the future to tell. That it will circle the globe now seems certain."

On May 8, 1914, President Wilson designated the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day "for displaying the American flag and for the public expression of love and reverence for the mothers of the country."

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ZEAL

2707 -- PROCESSIONARY CATERPILLARS

A man or a woman without a goal is like a ship without a rudder. Each will drift and not drive. Each will end up on the beaches of despair, defeat and despondency. John Henry Fabre, the great French naturalist, conducted a most unusual experiment with some Processionary Caterpillars. These caterpillars blindly follow the one in front of them. Hence, the name. Fabre carefully arranged them in a circle around the rim of a flower pot, so that the lead caterpillar actually touched the last one, making a complete circle. In the center of the flower pot he put pine needles, which is food for the Processionary Caterpillar. The caterpillars started around this circular flower pot. Around and around they went, hour after hour, day after day, night after night. For seven full days and seven full nights they went around the flower pot. Finally, they dropped dead of starvation and exhaustion. With an abundance of food less than six inches away, they literally starved to death, because they confused activity with accomplishment. Many Christians make that same mistake.

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ZEAL

2708 -- YOU MUST HOIST YOUR SAIL

The wind of God is always blowing -- but you must hoist your sail. -- Fenelon

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ZEAL

2709 -- ZEAL IS OFTEN NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE

When the Crystal Palace Exhibition opened in 1851, people flocked to London's Hyde Park to behold the marvels. One of the greatest marvels back then was steam. Steam plows were displayed. Steam locomotives. Steam looms. Steam organs. Even a steam cannon.

Of all the great exhibits that year, the first-prize winner was a steam invention with seven thousand parts. When it was turned on, its pulleys, whistles, bells, and gears made a lot of noise, but, ironically, the contraption didn't do a thing! Seven thousand moving parts making a lot of commotion... but having no practical use.

With the high-tech era we live in, it's easy to confuse activity with accomplishment, to be fooled into thinking that the sound of gears and pulleys is the sound of something important being done.

Is that true of your life? Of your church? Are there hundreds, even thousands, of parts spinning and turning and making a lot of noise, but accomplishing very little?

If so, just remember that even though your contraption may win a prize at the state fair or the denominational convention, God is the final judge. And what you think has substance may dissipate before His searching eyes like steam.

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THE END