



Youth and the power of God by Jim Stier

When Pam and I first arrived in Brazil, I was twenty-four and she was twenty-one. We were the pioneers and directors!

One of the first things we did was to go to a conference for foreign missionaries who had come together from around the country. We were at least ten years younger than anyone else. On several occasions, one experienced missionary or another would greet us with: "It's so nice to see young people here. Who are your parents?"

We would tell them that our parents were in the United States, and that we were there as missionaries. This almost invariably brought another question: "What agency are you with?" This question came with a lifting of eyebrows and an air of incredulity. The underlying implication was that whoever sent us was somehow terribly irresponsible.

Some think we're really not ready to do anything significant for God until we're old. The Bible disagrees. 1 Timothy 4:12 says, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."

In missions, there are many reasons why young people more easily adjust to the task than do older workers. They learn languages better. They have less tying them down and are freer to leave everything and go. They adapt to new situations and cultures better. They make friends more easily. They are healthier. They are more willing to run risks. They are more open to new approaches to solving problems. They can put up with harsh situations better. They tend to have an easier time believing God will do great and miraculous things. Of course, this list could go on and on.

That isn't to say that old geezers like me aren't useful as well, but it's good to get started while you're young if you can. It's very good to have a predominantly young missions force.

In the early nineties, a DTS team from Guinea Bissau in West Africa went on outreach to Conakry, French Guinea. One night it fell to an 18-year-old girl from Bissau to preach.

She was totally inexperienced and very nervous about speaking. She had prayed a lot and thought that she was supposed to talk about the power of God. When she was called to the pulpit she plowed bravely into her sermon. Within 15 minutes, she had said everything which she could think of on that subject.

It was embarrassing to stop after such a short time, but she didn't know what to do. After a short hesitation she called those present to stand to their feet and begin to praise God for His power.



While they were worshipping, a Muslim man wheeled into the back of the church in his wheelchair. He hadn't been out of the chair for over 20 years. As he listened to the Christians, it occurred to him that they might be right. Maybe Jesus could heal him. His belief started to grow and finally he stood up! He started walking, leaping, and praising God. After the service was over, he walked 25 kilometers back to his home village and told his family he had been healed by Jesus. What a victory for the Lord! It happened under the ministry of an 18-year-old!

I pray that in YWAM, the bulk of our workers will always be young. I hope that we always have more 18 and 19-year-olds than any other age group. Some will think it reckless, but it is an important factor in seeing the world reached for Jesus.

If you're young, go for it!

If you're an older leader, don't just accept young people. Go out of your way to encourage and promote their involvement with you. They will breathe life, energy, boldness, and creativity into your ministry teams and the world will end up hearing about Jesus.

Jim Stier is the Executive Chairman of Youth With A Mission.