

# **For Our Young People**

## ***Overcoming the Popularity Scene***

by Tony Ripley

There is a drastic change between the Elementary and Junior High School years. Over the Summer a cycle takes place that changes the young heart forever. Growth, maturity, hormone frenzies, to name a few. Boys start noticing the girls, the girls start noticing make-up, who is hanging out with whom looms over head daily, and how many parties have you been asked to? My daughter came home with anxiety claiming that one of her friends was asked to more parties than her! I had this dumb look on my face with a bit of a "so-what" stare while subtly shaking my head. My first response was that it didn't matter, because, "you're not going to any of those parties anyway". As the time graduates, students in school migrate from person to person trying to decide who is popular and who is not. So, you have young people (especially girls), who are trying to be everything but themselves in order to be a part of the popular scene. Here are some of the responses.

- (I) "Maybe I should try to be funny" -Why don't you just be yourself?
- (II) "Maybe I should start wearing make-up" - Why don't you be yourself?
- (III) "I think I should dress a little wilder" - Why don't you just be you?
- (IV) "Maybe I should be athletic" - Why not be who you are?
- (V) "Avoid all people, regardless of their feelings, if they are not considered popular" - Why not be what Jesus would have you to be?

This is a tough time for young people. I think more so for girls because they tend to mature a little quicker than the boys. Seventh grade boys are still a little reserved, although that will soon change! Since this is a difficult transition in the life of a pre-teen, it is more important than ever to spend more time in Bible study and prayer. Every time a young person opens up his Bible, he is reminded of his purpose in life and Who he is to be impressing. The popularity scene seems to fly out with the other non-important matters in life and the heart is brought back to where real character is born. Every time a young person prays he is able to share with God the troubles and cares of his life. He comes to the thrones of a Father who knows everything before he even utters it and who understands what he is going through. It is a time of remembering that we are to be holy and live holy as our Father is and expects us to be. During these hard times, a young person should go to his parents or guardian and ask questions that pertain to life and request answers from the Bible. Instead of rolling your eyes at the biblical answer you will most likely get, simply request an answer from the divine record of God's word. When you put your thoughts into God's will for you, the difficulty of transition becomes less stressing and less important.

Just be you! Just be who you are regardless whether you are one of the popular bunch. If being who you are places you in a different crowd, then so be it, as long as it is not a sinful acting group. Why avoid the band when you love the idea of playing an

instrument? Why avoid reading and spending time in the library when you love to read? Why act like school is boring when you really love school? Why would you avoid talking to someone because of popularity when you really like that person and would like to be friends? Overcoming the popularity dilemma is made easier if you just resolve to be happy with who you are and expect others to do the same. You'll find out as times goes by that people will respect you more because you paddle your own canoe.