

# Thoughts for Young Men

J.C. Ryle  
1816-1900

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Keepsake Curriculum  
To contact the publisher you may email  
[info@keepsakecurriculum.com](mailto:info@keepsakecurriculum.com)

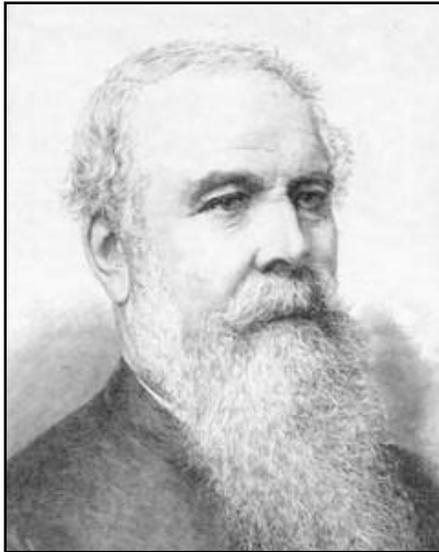
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*Dedicated  
To my three sons, Brian,  
Jonathan and Nathan. May  
these “Thoughts” encourage you  
to live a godly life.*

# Proverbs 2:1-6

*“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*

# Note from Publisher



John Charles (J.C.) Ryle was an Anglican bishop in the city of Liverpool in England. Born on May 10, 1816, he was the son of wealthy parents who were prominent members of Cheshire society.

In his early years, Ryle was not much interested in religion, however, he became seriously ill with a chest infection while doing

his undergraduate studies. Confined to his bed, he began to seriously read the Scriptures and spend time in prayer. It wasn't until attending an unknown church, arriving late and hearing the reading of Ephesians 2:8-9 that he fully accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

Leaving Oxford, he returned to help his father in the family business and assumed that he would inherit the estate. However, in June of 1841 the family was left ruined through bankruptcy and forced to leave their estate.

Forced to find a way to sustain himself and as a last resort, he offered himself for ministry in the Church of England. He was ordained in December of 1841.

Ryle began to study the writings of the Reformed theologians and this impacted him greatly. Later, he became known for his firm preaching and staunch defense of evangelical principles. As a prolific writer and vigorous preacher, he was uncompromising in his Biblical principles and he was a faithful pastor, who was the husband of three wives (widowed three times) and the father of five children.

Retiring at the ripe old age of 83, Ryle died several months later on June 10, 1900.

I hope and pray that this book will encourage young men to think spiritually and “live a life worthy of the calling (they) have received” (Ephesians 4:1b). In an age when young men are bombarded with sexual images, with violent electronic “games”, and with immature habits, it is imperative that we raise a generation of godly, thoughtful young men who are interested in thinking about eternal things, taking up their crosses, and following Christ.

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“It costs something to be a true Christian. Let that never be forgotten. To be a mere nominal Christian, and go to church, is cheap and easy work. But to hear Christ’s voice, follow Christ, believe in Christ, and confess Christ, requires *much* self-denial. It will cost us our sins, our self-righteousness, our ease, and our worldliness. *All-all* must be given up. We must fight an enemy who comes against us with thousands of followers. We must build a tower in troubled times. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have us thoroughly understand this. He bids us ‘count the cost’.” --- J.C. Ryle



# Introduction

When the Apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to Titus about his responsibility as a minister, he mentioned young men as a group requiring particular attention. After speaking of older men and older women, and young women, he adds this advice, "Encourage the young men to be self-controlled" (Titus 2:6). I am going to follow the Apostle's advice. I propose to offer a few words of friendly exhortation to young men.

I am growing old myself, but there are few things that I can remember so well as were the days of my youth. I have a most distinct recollection of the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the fears, the temptations and the difficulties, the mistaken judgments and the misplaced affections, the errors and the aspirations, which surround and accompany a young man's life. If I can only say something to keep some young man walking in the right way, and preserve him from faults and sins, which may hurt his prospects both for time and

eternity, I shall be very thankful. There are four things which I propose to do:

- I. I will mention some general REASONS why young men need exhorting.
- II. I will note some special DANGERS which young men need to be warned about.
- III. I will give some general COUNSEL which I beg young men to receive.
- IV. I will set down some special RULES OF CONDUCT which I strongly advise young men to follow.

On each of these four points I have something to say, and I pray to God that what I say may do good to some soul.

John Charles Ryle  
1816-1900

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# REASONS FOR EXHORTING YOUNG MEN

**"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the  
Lord and shun evil."**

**- Proverbs 3:7**

What are the general reasons why young men need specific exhortation? I will mention several of them in order.

*(1) For one thing, there is the painful fact that there are few young men anywhere who seem to be Christians.*

I speak without respect of persons; I say it of all. Rich or poor, gentle or rough, educated or uneducated, in the city or in the country--it makes no difference. I shudder to think how few young men are led by the Spirit, how few are on that narrow road which leads to life, how few are setting their affections on things above, how few are taking up the cross, and following Christ. I say all this with sorrow, but I believe, in God's sight, that I am saying nothing more than the truth.

Young men, you form a large and most important class in the population of this country; but where, and in what condition, are your souls? Regardless of where we turn for an answer, the report will be one and the same! Let us ask any faithful minister of the gospel, and note what he will tell us. How many unmarried young people can he remember who come to the Lord's Supper? Who are the most backward about the doctrines of salvation, the most irregular about Sunday services, the most difficult to draw to weekly Bible studies and prayer meetings, the most inattentive to whatever is being preached? Which part of his congregation fills him with the most anxiety? Who are the Reubens for whom he has the deepest "searchings of heart"? Who in his flock are the hardest to manage, who require the most frequent warnings and rebukes, who cause him the greatest uneasiness and sorrow, who keep him most constantly in fear for their souls, and seem the most hopeless? Depend on it, his answer will always be, "The Young Men."

Let us ask the parents in any county throughout this land, and see what they will generally say. Who in their families give them the most pain and trouble? Who need the most watchfulness, and most often provoke