

GOD, GUTS, AND GALLANTRY

Discussion Questions for Youth (Ages 13-19), Church Groups, or Your Own Teenage Children/Grandchildren

Those who lack a copy of the book can obtain one at www.willjoslin.com/major.

Leader: These questions for youth are designed for four to six sessions, and cover the first six chapters of the book. For another four or five sessions of youth questions, see the section relevant to youth on Dating and Marriage at <https://www.willjoslin.com/major/questions/datingandmarriage>.

For the first sessions, ahead of time, assign the youths to read Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, and give the assignment in such a way that they know you expect them to do so. If, when the time comes, all have not done so, have the youth to take turns reading pertinent sections of [Chapter 1 and Chapter 2](#) aloud.

After asking a question, please give the youth time to ponder and answer it. Only answer it yourself as a last resort. Also, feel free to improvise and be flexible if the conversations head in a slightly different direction, as long as it remains constructive. For variety, have the youth alternate asking the questions.

1. When James was a boy, what were most of his farming neighbors like?
2. What feelings did he have toward them?
3. What kind of observations about farming and business did James make as he was growing up?
4. At the end of Chapter 1, what did James believe was his life's purpose?

God gave a vision to young James Lide Coker, and God has a purpose for each of our lives. As with Major Coker, He wants to give each of us a vision for how we can serve Him and help others. In Ephesians 2:10 God tells us: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Let's pray together now and ask God to help each of us discover this vision. *Let the individual youths pray to God themselves if they are so inclined, then the leader can close the prayer time on behalf of everyone.*

Now let's now turn to 1 Samuel Chapter 3, where God called the boy Samuel to serve Him. *Have the youth take turns reading it out loud.*

5. Who did Samuel think was calling him?
6. Why do you think Samuel didn't recognize God's voice at first?
7. What did he have to stop doing before he recognized it?
8. Then what did he need to do?
9. Samuel was only about eleven years old when God called him to be His lifelong servant as prophet and priest. What do you think Samuel thought about God's call on him at that young age?
10. Did he tell God he was too young to take life that seriously?
11. If Samuel listened to God's call at eleven, what does that say to you about listening for God's call at your age?

In today's culture, some youth put off responsibility, then continue living irresponsibly after high school. They continue to depend on their parents or they party at the expense of their parents. This has been called "extended adolescence."ⁱ Examples would be:

- A capable twenty-six year old who is unemployed or underemployed, still lives at home or has part or all of his rent and bills covered by parents.
- A forty-year-old shifter who is still trying to live off his parents' money and credit cards. He sleeps late, then goes to the golf course. After that he spends nights in the local bars, wandering why he's not happy.

12. What do you think of "extended adolescence"?
13. What do you think Major Coker would have thought of "extended adolescence"?

14. What do you think living in “extended adolescence” may cost a young person in terms of his or her integrity, character, maturity, and personal growth?

Youth magazines, websites, movies, television shows, and even some college professors, promote the idea that rebellion against parents and against Christianity is normal.

15. What do you think young James Coker would have thought about the assumption that youth rebellion is normal? Why do you think of this? What does God’s word say about it?

16. Look back over the highlights in the first two chapters of this book. How much rebellion do you see in his young life in [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 2](#)? Why do you think that is?

17. Major Coker had a Christian mother and grew up in church, but he did not come to know Christ until he left home and went to The Citadel.

At the Citadel, the Major discovered that “God has no grandchildren”? What do you think that means?

18. Secondhand faith won’t last long, so let’s be real. Have you taken full ownership of Christ as your own Savior, or do you still only have a secondhand sort of faith from your parents? Remember that if you want to be a child of God, you yourself must be born again. Jesus said: “Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

19. Because of our inborn selfishness and sin, until we each take full ownership of Christ as our Savior, by nature, we are unable to serve God and others out of an eager and innocent heart. Have you taken full ownership of Christ as your own Savior, as Major Coker did at The Citadel? Why or why not? Are you ready to do so now?

The leader should prayerfully and carefully respond to each answer, encouraging the interested ones to trust in Christ now if they have not yet done so.

20. Major Coker discovered God’s purpose for him at an early age. As you consider your purpose, what talents and desires has God has given you? When we are fully surrendered to God, He uses both our talents and our desires to lead us toward your life purpose.

21. What vision do you think God may be giving you for serving Him? If the vision just tends to inflate our own ego, it is probably not from God. If it magnifies Christ and His kingdom, then it most likely is from God. If you aren't yet fully aware of God's plan for you, that's certainly okay. But do you think it might be a good idea to pray about it? *(Leader—Pray now for God to give each youth a unique vision for serving Him. Better yet, ask one of the youth to pray for this vision on behalf of himself/herself and the others.)*

Proverbs 20:11, NIV says: "Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright." As a youngster, James Lide Coker did hard farm work on his own assigned plot to help his family with planting cotton, picking cotton, fertilizing, and watering.

22. What do you do when your parents need your help with hard work like mowing and bagging grass, planting, or raking leaves? Do they have to ask for your help, or do you volunteer to assist them from a heart of love?

Leader: For the next sessions, assign the students to read Chapters 4 through 6. Chapter 3 is covered separately in questions dating and marriage from Major And Sue Cokers' lives at <https://www.willjoslin.com/major/questions/datingandmarriage>.

As a child, James Lide Coker ran his own small-scale farm in Society Hill very capably. Right after college, he profitably ran a much larger farm in Hartsville. Please reread the beginnings of both [Chapter 4](#) and [Chapter 6](#) to get a feel for how the Major thought and lived during his late teens and early twenties.

23. At the beginning of Chapter 6, how did Major Coker respond to only having one useable leg and to post-Civil War disaster and poverty, when he was still in his twenties?

24. When did he say "Aw, man—I've only got one good leg, no money, no crops, and all my farm animals are gone! Give a guy a break—I can't do hard farm work!"?

25. What would you do in a crisis situation like that?

26. Major Coker was a leader who influenced people toward God. Are you the kind of person who helps to influence your peer group and your youth culture toward God's ways, or do you just follow the crowd?

God instructs young believers: “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith, *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:12).

27. Whether consciously or not, we are all an example to our peers and even to those older than we are. The only question is: What kind of an example are you?
28. Do you think Major Coker’s good example originated on the outside, in a public image he tried hard to present, or on the inside, in his faith and attitude?
29. How can we improve our own example?
30. If smartphones had been available in Major Coker’s time, and if he had chosen to use one, how do you think he might have used it? How do you think he would not have used it?
31. Major Coker’s vision was to live for God and others, not only for himself. In Mark 16:25, Jesus said: “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” What do you think Jesus meant by “losing your life” and “saving your life”?
32. How would your life be different if you “lost your life” for Christ’s sake, and lived for Him and others?
33. What is a concrete step you want to take today to demonstrate for whom you are living? What about tomorrow?

As mentioned, questions of interest to youth on dating and marriage from Major And Sue Cokers’ lives may be found at <https://www.willjoslin.com/major/questions/datingandmarriage>.

ⁱ See Joshua Kennon’s “How Extended Adolescence Is Changing the United States (and Takes a Much Higher Toll on Women)” at <https://www.joshuakennon.com/how-extended-adolescence-is-changing-the-united-states-and-takes-a-much-higher-toll-on-women/> (last accessed December 29, 2019).