

YOLO

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Figuring out the text-messaging code can be daunting for us older folks. As an example of the generational disconnect, the following text exchange is reported to have taken place between a mother and her teenage son:



Mom's question to her son: "What does IDK TTYL mean?"

Son's reply: "I don't know. Talk to you later."

Mom's response: "OK. Thanks anyway. I'll ask your sister."

Just in case you're not ROTFL (rolling on the floor laughing) right now, or at least LOL (laughing out loud), the son's reply *was* the answer to his mother's question. "IDK TTYL" means "I don't know. Talk to you later." Being fifty years old myself, with a teenage son who knows and uses this often-elusive code, I know it's hard sometimes, but try to keep up.

Another code word out there these days is YOLO. It means You Only Live Once." Teens *really* like this one. It has even been referred to as the battle cry of this generation. Living with the YOLO mindset means doing all you can with the one life you have, not wasting your youth by sticking with what's safe or predictable. It means believing that the worst outcome would be growing old with regrets for not fully enjoying one's youth.

Now before we oldsters overreact by condemning the YOLO way of thinking, we should note that it is commended in the Bible. Solomon, the king known for his great wisdom, said this to young people:

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

What was Solomon saying to the teenager if not, "Go for it! Live your life to the fullest while you're young. Pursue the desires of your heart. Make your youth a time of rejoicing in all that life offers you—YOLO!"

We might shudder to think of all that our teens would do if they were to boldly follow the dictates of their hearts without restraint, or go after whatever appeals to their eyes. This sounds like a perfect prescription for unbridled sin. And it would be, had not Solomon added another sentence to the verse. "But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." Here we have the YOLO mindset commended, but then tempered by the reminder to young people that they live in God's world, subject

to His authority, and with the certainty of facing His judgment. Just a few verses later Solomon adds, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth" (21:1). And he ends the book with the words, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (12:13-14). What you do in your youth matters, not only to you and your peers, but also to God who sees and judges. You only live once—that is true—"and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

In Solomon's thinking, there is a righteous way of living out YOLO, and a wicked way of living it out. There is a wise way and a foolish way. The righteous and wise way starts with the earnest pursuit of the forgiveness and transformation associated with becoming one of Christ's followers. Apart from that, you exist every moment under the wrath of God. Furthermore, your unchanged heart will only lead you further astray so that you will go on "storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment is revealed" (Rom. 2:5). But as a follower of Christ, spiritually transformed and empowered to love wisdom and pursue righteousness, you will reverse this negative trend. Not only that, your life will be more meaningful, challenging, and rewarding than you could ever imagine, yet *without* wickedness and *without* foolishness. You will live without the dread of wasting your life, while at the same time living righteously for Christ in submission to His will.

Sadly, what most young people think they are gaining through the YOLO mindset is only an illusion. The world's version of YOLO deceives young people full of individual potential, transforming them into semi-mindless crowd followers. Rather than being independent thinkers, and thus *true* risk-takers, they simply do what everyone else their age is doing—what their peers have defined as "cool" (Actually, what was "cool" in my youth is now "tight," "sick," "dope," or "wicked"—just keeping you up-to-date). The thought is, because everyone else gets a body modification, you must get one too. Because everyone else keeps his brain glued to the latest electronic device, you must do the same. Because everyone else is having sex before marriage, drinking, and despising authority, you must imitate them if you want their approval. But this is not to "walk in the ways of your heart" as Solomon had in mind. It is to be a slave of culture—to be "the companion of fools," and thus to "suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20).

So here's my hearty **YOLO!** Live your one and only life in the one and only way that will provide true, and eternal satisfaction, with no regrets!