



PEACEFULSTORMS PHOTOGRAPHY

## Why We Have Youth Summer Camps

- Gerald Flurry
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Our campus in Edmond is a lot noisier than usual. One hundred thirty-two teenagers are here, playing sports, singing and enjoying themselves as part of Philadelphia Youth Camp, which started last week. They come from Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Peru, South Africa, the United Kingdom and all over the United States. Our staff includes dozens of Herbert W. Armstrong College students and administrators, as well as 28 volunteers from Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the U.S. This year marks the 26th year of pyc. We also host youth camps in England, Australia and the Philippines at other times.

These camps are far more important than is immediately apparent. They are a vision of how God will correct the problems of this entire world very soon.

God says the nation of Israel is ruined (Isaiah 3:8). One major reason is upside-down family life. "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths" (verse 12). This means many of the nation's young people are unprepared to face life. This is a major reason so many turn to drugs and other forms of escapism.

Between 2008 and 2015, suicide among school-age children and adolescents in the U.S. more than doubled! Among youths 10 to 24 years old, suicide is the second-leading cause of death, after unintentional injuries. One study said a major reason is the increase in media use, especially social media and video games.

SOMETHING IS DREADFULLY WRONG WITH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE! This is a crisis God cares deeply about.

Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of our work and after whom our college is named, always believed in having a strong youth program. Summer camps were held annually.

Malachi 4:5-6 is a prophecy about the work he did: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Mr. Armstrong worked to turn the hearts of parents to children and children to parents—and to their heavenly Father. We follow his example. We established Imperial Academy for our K-12 students, even offering the program online for seventh grade and up. We print a magazine for our teenagers, *True Education*. And we have continued holding youth summer camps.

Malachi 4 applies to God's spiritual Family and the physical family. God insists that we turn "the heart of the children to their fathers." To do this properly, the family must be turned to God and His love (verse 4).

SOON THE WHOLE WORLD IS GOING TO BE READY TO BE TAUGHT! God's Church (including the children) must be ready for that gigantic job. "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). God says we must prepare our youth and adults for the return of Christ.

Most of this happens just before the “dreadful day of the Lord.” That is the time element. God says we must be prepared when He gets here.

Verse 17 says we are to help our young people turn to God in the spirit and power of Elijah. A major part of this summer camp is teaching God’s plan. Of course the young people have a marvelous time swimming, biking, canoeing, playing soccer and other activities. But we can’t prepare our youth for Christ’s return without teaching God’s Word.

What we are doing at the Philadelphia Youth Camp helps prepare our youth to assist Christ in changing the world—even the universe!

God has a lot of care and concern for our young people. Jesus Christ wants to use them to help teach the whole world. We work hard to teach our youth that vision! ■

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