



Youths who are bucking the trend

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In a society where many teenagers are experimenting disastrously with drugs, alcohol, and even crime and gang affiliations – Ipu Schmidt and Nelson Scott are exceptions. At first glance, it doesn't appear that these two have much in common. Ipu is of Samoan descent and lives in Mangere with her mum and three older siblings. Nelson, who is 16, recently moved from Dunedin to Onehunga where he lives with his parents and three sisters.

Along with others of all ages who have studied the Bible, they will be baptised as ministers in a multicultural ceremony at the TelstraClear Pacific Events Centre this Saturday, August 26.

As Jehovah's Witnesses these teenagers are expected to uphold high standards including abstaining from drugs, drunkenness, and sex before marriage – a tough call in today's world where just about anything goes.

How does Ipu 15-year-old feel about these limits? "Really," she says, "I can see that these boundaries are there for a reason and stop me from getting hurt." Nelson agrees and says that he feels these high standards are a protection.

So what made them decide to take such a step? For Ipu this is the realization of a long-term goal, and Nelson says this is also a way of giving back. "Our Creator has given us a lot, and there's not much we can give in return, so this is my way of doing that. From my observation of other people's paths I can see that this is the best way for me."

Ipu and Nelson are also expected to have an active share in speaking to others about the Bible. On the weekends when their schoolmates are playing sport, shopping, and going to parties, these two spend a morning each taking an active share in speaking to others about the Bible's hope for the future.

Both agree that this is a challenge. Ipu says that she definitely has to "step outside my comfort zone," while Nelson admits that he gets a little nervous "but that the more you do it the better you get at it – and the more you enjoy it."

While they might spend some of their spare time doing community Bible work, don't think for a moment that these two are 'square'. Ipu is a talented artist and is learning the guitar, while Nelson has just finished restoring an off-road motorbike, which he rides whenever he can.

So what's next for these two clean living teenagers? Both plan to finish their schooling and gain practical employment skills. They also plan to assist in the building of an upcoming "Quickbuild" Kingdom Hall project in Mangere. Ipu's short-term goal is daily Bible reading, while Nelson would eventually like to gain an apprenticeship in the building industry so that he can fulfil his goal of working on the organization's large construction projects, both in New Zealand and overseas.

The 'Deliverance at Hand' convention will be held from 25-27 August and starts at 9.30 a.m. each day at the TelstraClear Pacific Events Centre, 770-834 Great South Road, Manukau. The public are welcome at this free event. The baptism ceremony is on Saturday 26 August at 12.20 p.m. Both Nelson and Ipu can be interviewed and photographed around this time.

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