

Why Older Believers Must Listen When a Young Person Shouts Something

When I was a teenager, I remember clearly making two statements.

The first was when my father punished me for breaking one of the many, many rules he had established for the household. I said, "When I am a father, I won't be so unreasonable to my children." (On a side note: I am now a father and grandfather and I am absolutely positive that I was just as unreasonable as my father.)

The second statement I made also dealt with my father and other adults that were a part of my life: "When I am old, I am going to listen to what young people are saying." In other words, I promised myself that as I got older, I would not discount things said by young people simply because they were young.

Over the past few weeks as the election draws closer, I have spent much more time than usual reading things written by the young people I know. In doing so, I have purposely made an effort to not simply chalk up their statements to youth and inexperience. I also made an attempt (as difficult as it was) not to respond to their posts in the way the older people in my life responded when I was the young person speaking.

Over the past few weeks, the young people in my circle of friends have been focused on two main things. The first is the election, which I am not going to talk about this week, although I hope and pray each of you that are able to vote will vote. The second was said by a young friend in this way: "Are we doing enough?" I asked this young person, "Enough what?" Then, I followed that discussion and several others,

including the discussion in which the meme was found.

Young people (and not-so-young people) are frustrated because they have seen people with needs, people being mistreated and people being killed, and they don't see the voices of leaders within their houses of worship doing anything about it. Some are not even willing to talk about doing something.

First, let me start by saying I dislike the meme I posted with my original blog because it misrepresents nearly everything it portrays. First of all, the Bible doesn't instruct the people of G-D to have the government provide food for the poor. The Bible instructs the individual and the corporate bodies of worship in each community and nationally to provide for the poor—never the government.

Individuals were commanded to leave the corners of their fields and to leave gleanings for the poor and also to give a portion of their tithes to be distributed to the poor. That's why James 1:27 (TLV) says "pure religion," not "pure government," and why we read Matthew 25:35-36, as it speaks about judgement of individuals:

"For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."

The truth is that over the past three generations, the people of G-D have abdicated their corporate responsibility to the government. More and more, we have placed providing for the needs of the poor, the elderly and the outcast into the hands of our government. We allowed this out of convenience.

It was easier for us to simply say, "Let the government handle it." The result of this is an impotent body of believers whose testimony looks uncaring and whose Messiah looks more like an unjust government than a loving Father. The result of our failure to provide for those in need through communities of

faith leads young people to make faulty conclusions like the one presented and also causes them to depart our congregations in search of a congregation that will follow the teaching and examples of the Scriptures.

We have all seen a T-shirt or a meme that says: "I don't want a religion; I want a relationship." This statement is a perverted twist of G-D's Word, which is the result of believers failing to actually live out pure religion as described in the Bible, which is totally based on relationship. It isn't religion *or* relationship; it is both religion *and* relationship.

So, are we doing enough? No, we are not. But the way to change this is not to ask for more government programs or to vote in a leader that tells us the government can fix all the ills of the world.

The solution is for every leader to evaluate their congregation and see if they are teaching and leading their people to demonstrate pure religion. If we will only do that, we will see what pure religion can accomplish.

Sometimes it is really important that old people listen to young people, even when we know what the young people are saying is wrong. Their heart's cry may help us to look for what is right. {eoa}

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