

Elder Believers Flow With Fountains of Wisdom

Tucked in the hills above the Sea of Galilee is an astonishing village that is hard for me to believe exists, although I've seen it with my own eyes! It's a small town in modern-day Israel, but there is little modern about it.

Aside from its quaint, folksy charm and its breathtaking views of biblical sites, what is most unique about it is that it is home to dozens of believers in Yeshua. And they're not simply any believers. They're "senior saints"—believers over 50.

You must understand that in 2013 Israel, there aren't enough believers (yet) to fill a football stadium, let alone a town. The most generous estimates put us at 20,000 here in a nation of nearly 8 million. It's a strong and growing remnant, but we are scattered in small pockets around the country.

But here, in this special place I visited for Passover, were nearly 100 Jewish, Israeli, older believers in Yeshua, all sharing a community together.

I was invited for a weekend by one of the "elders" of the congregation. He and his wife are a beautiful and vibrant couple, both approaching 70. They are passionate about Yeshua, they are passionate about community and they are passionate about ministering to the younger generation.

As someone who didn't grow up a believer (I got saved when I was 20) and as someone who is the only believer in my family (so far), I didn't have any older people in my life modeling what living for Yeshua is supposed to look like.

The first congregation I got plugged into, around age 25, was comprised of people mainly my age, plus other 20-somethings and a few young families. They taught me about Yeshua but not

from the perspective of someone who has run the race for 30, 40 or even 50 years!

There were a few along the way, like Don Notke, the father of my pastor's wife in Chicago. He was a man who, even as he lay dying from cancer, told me he was praying for me. There is Fern Story, the grandmother of some friends who, even with a shaky hand struck with Parkinson's, still sends me handwritten notes of encouragement.

But these experienced believers have been few and far between in my life. And that is a shame.

With all our emphasis on youth and modernity and "what's next," most of us (myself included) rarely take time to sit at the feet of those who have been doing this a lot longer than us to ask them questions or to just listen.

The people I visited last weekend made such an impact on my life in only 48 hours. It was like I walked in as a dry sponge and these folks were overflowing water pitchers just waiting to pour into me. And so they did.

They shared teachings with a depth of wisdom I have seldom heard from a pulpit. They had advice based on decades of experience. They had an appreciation for prayer and worship and fellowship that can only come from having practiced what they preached over an extended period of time. The sight of seeing a 60-plus-year-old man getting on his face on the floor in prayer left a mark on my mind that I don't expect to ever forget.

Yes, these tried and tested disciples are perhaps our greatest resource as a body of believers. Instead of relegating them to the role of something obsolete, we should be celebrating them and inquiring of them daily. They have walked the walk, and they can help guide us on our way. For us—the young, hip, modern generation—to believe that we know better is the height ofchutzpah!

I left my weekend in this special place refreshed, refocused and with a new respect for my elders. I can't encourage you enough to seek out someone in your congregation or community who is age 50 or 60 or above and ask them to share with you about how to finish this race well.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.' And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:1-4)

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