
Words of Truth

“Ye Younger, Submit Yourselves Unto The Elder”

By: Brian A. Yeager

We certainly live in a world full of problems. The world has been and always will be predominately sinful (Luke 13:23-24, Galatians 1:3-4, and I John 5:19; cf. Ecclesiastes 1:9). The world is in such a state that when Christ returns, He questioned as to whether or not there would be faith on earth (Luke 18:8). Thus, when I say that our society has a huge problem that we have to face, I am not trying to elevate the subject of this article above any other problem of sin we face.

Having said that the world, our nation included, is full of sin; I want us to consider a huge problem we have to prevent from becoming an issue in this congregation. Our society has a problem wherein young people do not respect their elders. In fact, they blatantly disrespect their elders. I am not just talking about teenagers either. People in their twenties, thirties, forties, etc. are younger than those who are elder. You do not, biblically speaking, reach a certain age wherein you become old enough not to show respect unto those older than you. The word of God gives us some instructions on this subject matter that we MUST all adhere to. Let's see those instructions.

What God Says About The Younger Submitting To And Respecting Their Elders

Notice the following Scriptures, which on their own, clearly show the point of this article: *“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD... Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity... Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”* (Leviticus 19:32, I Timothy 5:1-2, and I Peter 5:5-6).

I am a father of three children (ages 18, 15, and 14). My two sons are faithful Christians. I am a Gospel preacher with an authority given to me by God to speak with all authority (Titus 2:15). I am experienced in many things. Many times, I have more knowledge of the Scriptures and other matters than older men around me have due to the time I spend studying by vocation (I Timothy 4:12-16). However, I recognize my place. At meals wherein older Christian men are present, I give them the place to decide who prays for the meal. In discussions, outside of my role as a Gospel preacher, I give place to older men and older women. In all things, I recognize older brothers and sisters in Christ as fathers and mothers. Why? It is right according to God based upon the Scriptures quoted above. Having said all of that, there are times wherein age doesn't demand submission nor even a certain level of respect.

There Are Qualifiers

With age comes an expectation from God. Notice: *“The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness”* (Proverbs 16:31). With age should come wisdom. The aged should be teachers of the younger (Titus 2:1-6). That is what is SUPPOSED to happen. However, not all older people are wise or honorable.

From chapter four through chapter thirty-one of the book of Job, older men displayed the lack of wisdom in a discussion with the then erring Job. There was a younger man (Elihu) who showed wisdom and responded in a godly manner. Notice part of what occurred as a pattern of what this article is about: *“So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled. And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, Harken to me; I also will shew mine opinion. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words”* (Job 32:1-12).

Elihu showed restraint and respect for older men. When the time came that they failed, then he stepped up. At that point he then offered words of rebuke. This is right. There is a time wherein the young can rebuke the old (I Timothy 5:19-20). However, that is not to give a rebuke permit to young people who lack the wisdom to see afar. We (including myself) have to be cautious not to err ourselves when dealing with those whom are are elders. However, these points are not a license for older folks to act higher than the younger.

Respect Is Not A One-Way Street Either

Regardless of age, brethren should be servants of one another (Galatians 5:13 and Philippians 2:3-12). Regardless of age, all Christians are to show honor to others (I Peter 2:17). Regardless of age, all Christians should show preference to others (Romans 12:10). Therefore, the color of ones hair (so to speak) should not get to their heads too much.

Conclusion

There is a balance in how young and old should treat one another. It is delicate. The older should have the wisdom to walk the line. The younger should submit. When we all walk according to the way God wants things, everything lines up perfectly. Most of us are elder to some and younger to others. If we'd all be respectful, no issues would arise. However, the world we live in disregards these principles we've discussed. Let's think differently than the world (Romans 12:1-3).