

## Older, But Not Necessarily Wiser

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As a general rule, heeding advice from those older than us is wise and recommended (Lev. 19:32; Deut. 32:7; Prov. 1:8; 4:1-4, etc.); however, there can be exceptions. Remember that it was the older prophet who led the younger prophet astray and to his death (1 Kings 13). It was the younger generation who had the faith and courage to take the promised land of Canaan (Num. 13, 14; Josh. 3). It was young David who had more wisdom and faith than his older brothers and King Saul (1 Sam. 17). It was young Daniel and the other Hebrew youths who had more wisdom and faith than the most powerful king on earth and all his advisers. Timothy was a young man who was trying to teach and preach, and some older than him would be hesitant to listen to him, simply because of his youth. Paul therefore told him to conduct himself in such a way that no person could doubt him simply based on his age: *“These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Tim. 4:11,12).

In years past as a younger Christian trying to teach others the Truth, I have often heard, “I’ve been studying the Bible longer than you’ve been alive!” This type of response comes from people who realize they are wrong, but are unwilling to change. Instead of humbly admitting their error and changing, their pride is clearly revealed, and they resort to personally attacking the messenger (Gal. 4:16). Maybe they have studied longer than I have been alive, and maybe they really have read the whole Bible five times, but that does not prove they are correct! *“Let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Rom. 3:4; 1 Thess. 5:21). I have been blessed to learn great things from both younger people and older people on many occasions, and only a fool rejects Truth simply because it comes from a younger person: *“Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished”* (Eccl. 4:13; cf. Matt. 18:3; 19:13, 14).

It’s also a shame when younger Gospel preachers who are zealously standing for the Truth are admonished to stop by the elders of the congregation or older preachers. Sometimes it is a younger preacher who has to refute error taught by older brothers in Christ. Even when done respectfully, some respond, “Young man, how dare you question what this older brother teaches?” I have never understood such a mindset. Someone has to step up, for the sake of souls, and if the older generation will not do it, then the younger must (Num. 13, 14; 1 Sam. 17:32-37; Ezek. 22:30; 1 Tim. 4:11-16). In fact, younger preachers should not wait for older preachers to step up. The younger preacher has exactly the same right and responsibility to defend the Truth as the older preacher (or any Christian, for that matter). Ultimately, the criterion for determining whether something is right or wrong is not the age of the person involved, but whether the action aligns with God’s Word.

May we always love and respect those older than us (1 Tim. 5:1, 2), but remember that sound words can also come from younger people. Any advice or doctrine conflicting with God’s Word must be rejected, even if coming from an older person. *“The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness”* (Prov. 16:31, emp. JPH).