

Daily View

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" Hebrews 3:13

July 14, 2020

Listen to your 11 year old

I'm not writing any of these memoirs and stories to make myself look good. That's tacky in speech or print. The story I'm telling today could border on that, I guess, but that's not my point. I did something when I was young and have wondered ever since what prompted me to do it. If we can extract a principle or two from it, there might be a lesson worth learning.

The incident took place when I was 11 years old, living in Vallejo. As I've mentioned before, my best friend back then was Wesley "Punky" Taylor — a rather "spirited" child. Wesley's parents were Mormons; in fact, Wesley's older brother was on a two-year mission to Mexico.

One afternoon, I approached Wesley's mother and asked her, point blank, "how can those young men who are not married be 'elders' in the church?" I had my Bible and was armed with scriptures (from I Timothy 3 and Titus 1). I remember zeroing in on "husband of one wife" and "having believing children" in those texts.

That's where it ended. She listened politely, tapped me on my little head, so to speak, and then I took my Bible and went back to our little house above the church building. I'm not sure I even told my parents about this. Maybe I was disappointed that I didn't "convert" Mrs. Taylor. Maybe I thought, "this is an airtight case; she has to agree with me" but she didn't even argue her case, so I was deflated. I don't remember how I felt afterwards. However, this incident raises a question in my mind and, I believe, illustrates an important point for adults.

The question that has dogged me for many years is this: *what motivated me, at 11 years old, to talk to an adult mother of my best friend about biblical things?* My parents never sat me down and talked to me about Mormonism. However, I may have overheard something my parents said about the young Mormon elders (it was pretty common for the young men to show up at our door).

For whatever reasons, at age 11, I was able to make a cogent argument to an adult lady on a biblical point. But what compelled me to even attempt to present an argument to an adult? There have been many times since

I've been older that I didn't do that. There are times even now when I find it hard to bring up a topic that I know someone will disagree with.

It wasn't because I was some kind child prodigy; far from it. It wasn't because I read my Bible all the time. My dad had me memorize scriptures but the texts on the qualifications of the elders were not among the ones he assigned. Bottom line, I heard some teaching somewhere, knew it applied to my friend's mother and took my Bible and talked to her. I wish I could get a handle on the why I did that so I could help other 11 year olds (and 13, 17, 19, 30 and 40 year olds) do the same.

I'm not the only one. I remember a great story about

how Paiton Cain, when she was a second grader, told her friend that she shouldn't say "omg." She even took her dad's Bible to school to show her why (she wanted a "serious" Bible not her pink one). I remember how much that warmed my heart. You might be surprised to know how much I have learned from 2

year olds, 5 year olds, 7, 10, 12 year olds. Maybe we need to listen to that 11 year old inside all of us. Jesus reminds us of Psalm 8:2, "Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength..." (see Mt. 21:16; Mt. 11:25)

There is a second takeaway from this incident and it's probably more important. It is a reminder to *take kids seriously*. Mrs. Taylor, bless her heart, wasn't inclined to take me seriously. "What can he know?" she had to be thinking, "he's just a kid."

Listen to younger people because they often see things that adults don't see and say things that cut through the clutter and get right to the point. Whatever you do, don't ignore them. Listen to what they have to say; you may learn something.

News

[As you know, governor Newsom has issued a health directive that prevents us from meeting at the building. The elders will comply with this order; more information will come in an email later today.]