

Youth and Religions

Joe Slater

About fifteen years ago, in Purcell, Oklahoma, a high school English teacher required her students to keep a journal in which one of the topics was, "How Important Is Religion To You?" That would probably result in her being fired nowadays, but that's another topic for another time. Here are some of the things her students wrote (without correction of spelling or grammar). Blanks indicate denominational names omitted.

"Religion is really not that important to me. I believe in going to church and learning about God. But I think it doesn't matter of your _____, _____, or any other religion. Everyone learns about God some how. Everyone has different beliefs. We shouldn't make fun of any religion. We are all in God's family and we all should see that." – Tara

"Myself, I am not too worried about religion. I think we should believe in religions though. I think later in my life I will attend church regularly. I usually attend Youth Group because it is with people my age. Religion on a scale from 1 to 10 it would probably get a two. That is all I gotta say about that." (unsigned)

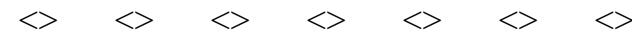
"It is not really important to me seeing as how I am an atheist. I went to church a couple of times but it never did nothing for me. Im just glad that Im not some huge hypocrite like many other people in this school. And I've noticed that they all go to the _____ Church for some reason. Well, not all of them go there but the majority of them." (unsigned)

Here's a classic: "To me, religion doesn't do anything It doesn't effect me. I believe in God and everything it's just I don't pray to him. I don't think God put me on earth to praise him I think he put me here to do what I want with my life. I don't understand people that devote their lives to God. I remember in history class, I read that a monk set himself on fire to protest the communitis because they didn't believe the same things he

did. I could talk all day about religion but I have better things to do with my time." (unsigned)

"Religion is important to me I guess. I hate when people stereotype me because I'm a _____ or because I don't go to church every Sunday. People think that because I go to parties and go out with my friends that I'm not a Christian. Nobody can tell me I'm not a Christian! I don't read the Bible but I do go to church." –Scott

Reading these makes me thankful for our young people in this congregation. It makes me thankful for their parents and their Bible class teachers, too! Considering the negative effects of denominationalism, libertinism, Darwinian evolution, and secular humanism, let us renew our determination to teach God's word faithfully, and to bring up our children "*in the training and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). May God help us to that end!



Walking With Wise Men

Solomon said, "*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed*" (Proverbs 13:20). The question arises: who are the wise, and who are the foolish. Jesus said the wise are those who hear His words and do them; He also said that the foolish are those who hear His words, but do not do them (Matthew 7:24-28). In Luke 12:20-21 He said that the fool is one who lays up treasures for himself, but is not rich toward God.

The Psalmist, as well as the apostle Paul, stated that one is a fool who says there is no God. A fool will not listen to God's word, but a wise man not only listens, but applies what he learns to his life.

The apostle Paul also said, "*Evil companionship corrupts good morals*" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Who are your close companions, the wise or the foolish?

--Ernest S. Underwood (via Voice of Truth International

A Birdie Told Me

Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known (Ecclesiastes 10:20 NASU).

"A birdie told me" Mom said, when I asked her how she knew about what I had done as a kid. Solomon mentions something like this in our text. Solomon is using an ancient saying that is still popular today. In using this expression, he is revealing several important truths:

First, we must appreciate the **speed of words**. We often say "good news travels fast." But in this modern age of technology, news (good and bad) travels at speeds never before imagined. Knowing, therefore, how quickly news gets out, we should choose our words carefully.

Second, we must appreciate the **power of words**. We can say things - even in "confidence" (like our bedroom) - that can negatively affect us and others. Words do hurt, offend and kindle hard feelings. Therefore, it is vital that we guard what we say at all times - even in situations where we believe no one will ever figure out what we say. Our speech should "*always*" be with grace (Colossians 4:6), and we should "*let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth*" (Ephesians 4:29).

Third, we must appreciate the **appropriateness of words**. Again, remember Paul's admonition to "*consider how we ought to respond to every person*" (Colossians 4:6). In Solomon's example, a person wants to "curse" both a king and a rich man. Even though they may deserve the curse, it still shouldn't be given - even by one in private. We must never speak evil of anyone.

Fourth, we must appreciate the **danger of words**. Solomon warned that "*the lips of the fool consume him*" (10:12). What will happen if the king and rich man find out what was said? It will not be good for the one who uttered the foolish curse (Matthew 5:21-26).

We must learn to control our tongues! James spent considerable time making this very point in his epistle (James 3). May we always exercise wisdom with our words, not only in what we say but where we say them.

--Denny Petrillo (Denver, CO)