

## The Value of Experience

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The Bible puts a premium on experience. The local church is primarily led by those who are experienced in life and faith. This is true regarding elders and deacons. More broadly, the Bible emphasizes the need for those who are older to teach those who are younger.

Rather than discussing leadership in the local church or the dynamic between generations, we will focus our attention on the subject of experience. What is the purpose of experience? Are there dangers to experience? What is the proper use of experience? The Bible addresses these and other related issues.

### About Experience

**1. Youth and inexperience.** One of the biggest challenges to youth is inexperience. Inexperience in youth is not wrong. It is simply a fact of life. For this reason, decision-making can be especially perilous. Decisions can be made rashly, without consideration of potential consequences.

To account for the inexperience of youth, the Bible instructs young people to listen to the wisdom of their parents. For example, the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon. He wrote the book from the perspective of a father teaching his son. Some of the opening lines of this book state, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck" (Prov. 1:8-9).

Parents have a measure of experience that their children lack. Parents wisely teach their children how to approach life in a godly manner. When children follow the wise instruction of their parents, they can make better-informed decisions and avoid pitfalls that are common to youth. Solomon also wrote, "Wisdom is found in those who take advice" (Prov. 13:10). When young people incorporate wise counsel into their lives, they will be blessed.

**2. Gaining experience.** As young people grow and embark on life, they are often met with a discouraging phrase: "Sorry, we are looking for someone with more experience." Gaining experience can be difficult in pursuing a career and or other endeavors. Yet, we must be persistent in life. We must prepare ourselves and be ready to seize opportunities when they are presented. Paul acknowledged this when he wrote, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16).

When we are given opportunities, we must learn from our experiences. As we acquire knowledge and understanding, we can make better use of our abilities. Gaining experience involves making decisions and learning from the consequences. Knowledge and experience form wisdom.

In life, we have to make decisions for ourselves. Sometimes we make wise decisions. Sometimes we make unwise decisions. Regardless, we are to learn from our good and bad

experiences and apply them in the future. Sadly, some never learn from their experience. Solomon wrote, "Fools find no pleasure in understanding..." (Prov. 18:11). We have a similar saying: "There's no fool like an old fool."

**3. The danger of experience.** If experience is not used properly, it can lead to disastrous outcomes. Experience can produce pride. If we are not careful, our experience can deceive us into thinking we know best; we are smarter and wiser than everyone else; we are superior. Solomon warned, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom" (Prov. 11:2). Humility and meekness are paramount qualities for becoming effective in using the wisdom of experience.

When recently listening to a sermon, the preacher declared that his opinion was better than younger people's because he had a PhD. and had been married a long time. While the preacher possessed experience, he also possessed a prideful attitude in the use of his experience. Lording experience over others will render our influence ineffective. James addressed the dangers of this when he wrote, "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom" (Jas. 3:13).

**4. The proper use of experience.** We can gain experience in everything we do in life. Whether it is marriage, raising children, school, or career-related, we must approach all areas of life with a desire to learn and improve. We must aspire to greater faithfulness in all events and relationships of life.

To this end, Paul wrote: "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5). Even through hardships, we can gain blessings. By enduring adversity, our character and hope can be strengthened. Then, we can use what we have learned to help someone in their time of struggle (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Also, the proper use of experience involves self-giving service. We are to use our experience to improve the welfare of others. We must teach, encourage, and warn those who are lesser experienced in life and godliness. This is not to be done from a self-righteous perspective, but a perspective of humility and love.

If you have experienced the struggles of employment, encourage someone in a difficult working situation. If you are on the other side of raising teenagers, support the parents who are in the throes of that challenging time. If we know what it's like, then we must use our insight to help bear the burden of someone struggling (Gal. 6:2).

### **Conclusion**

As we go through life, we must use the lessons of our experiences to grow and help others along the way. No one gets through life without making mistakes and sinning. We will experience the consequences of short-sightedness and selfishness. However, we must learn from such and

pass on what we have learned. This is why the Bible instructs the older to teach the younger. The wisdom gained through the life-long experience of the older generation is invaluable for the younger generation to maturity and equipping them to one day be the wise, older generation.