

YOUNG AND UNASHAMED

by Trip Lee

Young cats are definitely not known for their devotion to the Lord. I mean just think about the folks at your school, the folks you kick it with, or even the people at your church. Young believers, many times, just don't seem to have much of a concern about their faith or their spiritual maturity. Why is this? I remember one time when I was at the barbershop in the chair. The lady who was cutting my hair (she was a believer) noticed the FOTU (Fellowship of the Unashamed) shirt I had on. It sparked a conversation about spiritual matters. Throughout the conversation she was able to see that I wasn't your average believer, but that I was devoted and unashamed (glory to God). We eventually got on the subject of other young believers. She too had observed that most young folk just don't think too much about the Lord. Her response to this was, "Well they kids, you can't really expect much. Everyone isn't like you." As if I was some sort of phenomenon or some kind of exception to how it's supposed to be.

This, unfortunately, is how most believers think of young folk: that we're all young and immature in our faith, but we can't really be blamed because we're young and that's how it's supposed to be. That couldn't be farther from the truth! And what's crazy is that this is not a new issue. The Apostle Paul wrote Timothy two letters. In his first, he addressed this problem. 1 Timothy 4:12: Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity (NIV).

So now we can clearly see that, though it is the norm, it is not acceptable for young folks to be totally unconcerned with spiritual matters. And the truth is, we can't really be upset when folks expect so much less from young believers. We can't just expect the same amount of respect if we don't demonstrate the same amount of spiritual maturity. We allow people to look down on us because the only example we tend to set is what NOT to do. I'm a young dude myself; only seventeen, and personally I get tired of being looked down upon. We're known for doing wrong not right, rebellion not revival. It's time that we rise up as young, respectable, and unashamed believers. How do we do that?

1. Set yourself apart from the world.

The world and sin are cousins. Unfortunately as believers, we often times forget that the world is our enemy. James 4:4 tells us that friendship with the world is hatred toward God, and that when we befriend the world we become an enemy of the living God. So how do we set ourselves apart from our enemy? Peter addressed this problem. 1 Peter 2:11- Dear friends I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world, to abstain from the sinful desires which war against your soul.

He was talking to Christians. He referred to us as aliens and strangers because that what we're supposed to be! Think about it. If you see an alien walking down the street you would notice it. They would stand out. People should notice something different about us as believers. Just like aliens don't belong here, neither do we. We're representatives of Heaven and we should act like it. So what would make us stand out so much? Peter says it plainly, "abstain from the sinful desires which wars against your soul." In other words, keep from sinning! Not that the ultimate goal of your Christian life is only to? Not sin? It goes much deeper than that. Jesus encouraged

us to love the Lord with all our heart mind soul, and strength, so part of that is resisting temptation to disobey the Lord in our lives. We do our best to fight that sin that wars against our souls.

It battles against our souls because we are believers, a royal priesthood, and new creatures. Everyone should just automatically know not to ask you to do this or that because they already know without asking that "Nah you don't do that there." Become a part of the 116 Clique. Let them know you're not ashamed of the gospel. Tell others what helps you to stand out so much. Even when folks shun you and talk about you be proud to be part of the brotherhood of believers.

2. Get off milk and onto solid food.

If we don't want to be looked down upon and we want to be seen as mature believers we have to actually become mature believers. Imagine that! Hebrews 5:13-14 tells us that? Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.? The milk it refers to is the elementary teachings of the gospel. For instance, if the only thing you know about your faith is that you're going to Heaven when you die, chances are you're still on milk. We must get beyond this. So how do we get acquainted with teaching about righteousness?

It says it clearly in the verse. We have to by constant use train ourselves. We must constantly be working hard to strive for righteousness. Trying to make the right decisions and learning from the mistakes we make. We have to constantly be in the word as well. There should never be a day in our lives when we do not mature spiritually. We cannot possibly mature spiritually without reading the word. I know, I know easier said than done. But why do we find it difficult to read diligently? Because we don't understand that it is a treasure. The bible tells us any and everything that we could ever need to know about life! It has all the wisdom, the guidance, the answers that you could ever need. The bible is the mind of God on paper. Who better to tell us how to live our lives than the one who created and is in complete control of everything?

Yeah, sometimes it can seem hard to understand and less than entertaining. But think about your friends. The first times ya'll were around each other it may have been slightly awkward because ya'll just didn't know each other. But the more time ya'll spent together and get to know each other, the more you wanted to be around each other. It's the exact same way with the Lord. His word is his way of speaking to us. So the more time we spend with Him, better acquainted we will get with Him and the more we will enjoy fellowship with Him. If we don't want to be seen as spiritual infants we must get off milk and onto solid food. Let us train ourselves so that they won't look down on us and they will see us as mature believers.

3. Change Your Surroundings.

I can guarantee you that anyone who is mature in their walk with the Lord has completely different surroundings than they did before they were sold out. It's what we need. We can't expect to get more mature in our walk without making some changes. My man B. J. hit me with it like this. We got two dogs: our worldly dog and our spiritual dog. They are fighting. So who's going to win? The one we feed more. The one we tend to and make stronger. So if we constantly feeding our worldly dog with our music choices, the videos, our friends, the places we go to, etc. that

worldly dog is going to win EVERYTIME!

We may have to change some of the places we hang out and who we hang out with. How much respect can we get if we doing all the same old things all the other young folks do? These things are detrimental to our spiritual growth. We must surround ourselves with other believers who are striving for righteousness. The word tells us in Proverbs 13:20 that "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." Fools being those that submit to their flesh rather than the Lord. Whether you notice it or not your friends to influence you. Because of this you must be careful who you hang around.

You may even have to change the music you listen to or the TV shows you watch. Once again, the dog we feed more will win the fight. So why don't we pop in a 116 CD every now and then or some Cross Movement, or watch some Christian television. Something that will aid us in our spiritual growth rather than hurting it. Our surroundings affect us tremendously.

I'm grateful to say that the Lord has allowed me to surrender my life to Him and I am now ?souled out?! Nothing I do during the day is done without thinking whether or not the Lord would approve. Don't get me wrong; sometimes I ignore what the Lord wants me to do. I still fall like everyone else but the Lord has graciously allowed me to minimize those happenings. The Lord used a number of things to help me get on the road to becoming like him. All of the things I mentioned above are included.

One of the major ones is accountability. I roll with a clique of dudes who are striving for the same things I am. We check up on each other to make sure that we are living right. A few times a week we'll either meet up or it can be as simple as a phone call. Just to ask each other how much we've been reading, or how we've been doing with our sin problems, etc. It's a huge help to have other believers in your corner encouraging you and holding you to your new way of life.

Another one of the major ones is discipleship. A little while after I started really living this thing out I got acquainted with someone who was striving for the same things I was but was more mature in his faith. He offered to pour into me and teach me all the things he had learned. We started to talk on the phone a lot, meet up a lot and I was able to ask him whatever questions I had about anything. The Lord really used him to help me grow more and He still is. We should all try to find someone that we look up to in the faith to help guide us in the right direction. Actually we all NEED someone like this. Just make sure that any advice, counsel, etc. that they give you lines up directly with the word of God. And after we have become mature in the faith we can then do the same. Find someone and pour into them, teach them everything you've learned. Its important that we reproduce. I want to encourage all of you to press on in your endeavors to be young and unashamed. If He can do it with me, for sure He can with you. Grace and peace.

About the Author

Trip-Lee is senior in high school in Dallas TX holding it down in a major way for Jesus Christ with his entire life. He is a hip hop artist featured on the 116 Clique Compilation CD, who loves the opportunity to teach and make disciples.