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“Advice for Living”

March 1958
Chicago, Ill.

Question: *Do you think Negroes are partly responsible for their plight? They don't stick together and they don't help each other. Negroes, for example, will walk past a Negro-owned grocery store or shoe shop to get to a white place. Instead of trying to make themselves financially independent, most Negroes are trying to keep up with the Joneses. Isn't it time for us to stop begging and stand on our own feet?*

Answer: I quite agree that there is a great deal that the Negro can do to lift himself by his own bootstraps. Well has it been said by one that Negroes too often buy what they want and beg for what they need. Negroes must learn to practice systematic saving. They must also pool their economic resources through various cooperative enterprises. Such agencies as credit unions, savings and loan associations, and finance companies are needed in every Negro community. All of these are things that would serve to lift the economic level of the Negro which would in turn give him greater purchasing power. This increased purchasing power will inevitably make for better housing, better health standards, and for better educational standards.

Question: *Young parents nowadays cater to every whim and wish of their children. I was in a home the other day where a three-year-old child read the riot act to his mother. The mother took it with a sheepish smile. This, I am told, is permissiveness. It seems to me that what modern children need is a large dose of parental permissiveness applied to their backsides. Do you agree?*

Answer: It is quite true that many modern parents go too far in allowing their children to express themselves with hardly a modicum of discipline. Many parents justify this by arguing that the children must have freedom. But freedom can very easily run wild if not tempered with discipline and responsibility. This almost “lunatic fringe” of modern child care has been responsible for most strange and fantastic methods of child rearing in many American homes. The child is permitted to almost terrorize the home for fear of having its individuality repressed. Somewhere along the way every child must be trained into the obligations of cooperative living. He must be made aware that he is a member of a group and that group life implies duties and restraints. Social life is possible only if there exists a balance between liberty and discipline. The child must realize that there are rules of the game which he did not make and that he cannot break with impunity. In order to get all of these things over to the child it is often necessary to subject the child to disciplinary measures.

Question: *I made a mistake when I was young. I had a child out of wedlock. When I got married, my husband constantly reminded me of it. So the marriage failed. And now I am right back where I started. I am the black sheep of my family and of the small town in which I live. How long must I pay for one mistake? Should I pick up and go to another town to live?*

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Answer: Your problem is one that must find its solution in the domains of psychology and religion. There is the danger that you will develop a morbid sense of guilt as well as an extremely sensitive attitude toward your past mistake. This would be tragic. You must somehow turn your vision toward the future rather than the past. You should concentrate on the heights which you are determined to reach, not look back into the depths in which you once fell. With this wholesome attitude you will be able to stand up amid all of the criticisms that persons in your town will direct toward you. In other words, you can so outlive your past mistake that even the most ardent critic will develop a warm respect for you. You can still live in the same town and win the respect of the community. I would also suggest that you give your life to certain high and noble pursuits. In so doing you will be able to concentrate on such challenging and ennobling ideas that you will not have the time for self pity.

Question: *I have attended the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Church of Christ and the Church of God in Christ. I have also talked to members of the Jehovah Witnesses. All of them say they are right, that their way is the only way to salvation. They can't all be right because in many instances the doctrines are contradictory. Is there a one and only way to God?*

Answer: I would answer your question with an emphatic NO. No denomination can validly claim that it is the one and only way to God. God is bigger than all of our religious denominations. The boundless sweep of God's revelation can never be limited to any particular church. It is true that most of the denominations have certain doctrinal and ritualistic differences, but there is a deeper unity which makes them all one. Although there need not be uniformity between the various religious denominations, there should be unity. Actually, no major denominations within Protestantism claim to possess absolute truth. So I would suggest that you join the church which can best serve your religious and spiritual needs, realizing all the time that no church possesses absolute truth.

Question: *I am in love with a white woman who lives in a southern state. Its laws forbid us to marry. I feel guilty about my desire to break the law. I think our love for each other is right and true. If it is, why does the law say otherwise?*

Answer: It is quite true that all southern states legally prohibit interracial marriages. In fact, several of the states outside of the South have laws forbidding marriage between different racial groups. These laws exist because of certain misguided religious views as well as long entrenched social customs. Many people sincerely feel that the Bible prohibits interracial marriages. Others are opposed to them because they have come up under a system in which the folkways and mores are firmly opposed to them. The religious convictions and social customs of the South have become so crystallized against interracial marriages that it is very difficult to get any rational thinking on the subject. Indeed, the whole question of intermarriage has developed many irrational fears within the white south. It is a subject in which sheer emotionalism takes over and rationality is pushed entirely in the background. Of course, there is no justification for laws against interracial marriages either on religious or rational grounds. The Bible neither condemns nor condones intermarriage. It simply does not deal with the question.

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3 Mar 1958 On purely rational grounds one comes to see that marriage is a mutual agreement between two individuals and not between two races. Therefore, there should be no laws against intermarriage.

PD. *Ebony*, March 1958, p. 92.