

Advice of an Old Man

Mark Twain has been attributed this saying: “We’re all ignorant; it’s just about different things”.

Sometimes it makes good sense to seek out the direction and guidance of someone else when we’re facing a situation about which we lack confidence. No one would consider this natural reaching out for help to be abnormal in any way. We all have limits to our individual experiences and it’s these experiences that give us the confidence to continue going forward into the world, handling our business.

If it were you who wanted some advice for whatever reason, to whom would you go for it? And why would you pick that particular person over someone else? What should guide you in your search for helpful advice should you decide to pursue it?

I suggest that it matters a great deal from whom you get your direction. You shouldn’t accept guidance from just anyone. The person from whom you request advice should instill you with the confidence that they have been making their own lives work well. You should be able to see ample evidence of their ability to manage for themselves their own curveballs. We all receive them.

It matters how your source of advice has navigated their own life’s terrain. If they’ve done well then perhaps they can advise you. If not then you should look elsewhere for guidance. If, considering all that you know about this advice-giver, you believe them to be generally successful in managing their own lives, then their advice to you will seem safe and desirable.

I guess what I’m really trying to get to is this: How do *you* grade advice? Sure, it might seem to address your pressing issue of the moment but what is this advice based on? When you’re operating in the dark, any source of light might be hungrily welcomed.

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If you need advice about something then you probably don't know which way to go on it. You're confused and moving in a place of unfamiliarity and your very unfamiliarity with the subject about which you seek advice makes you the least qualified judge of the quality of the advice you're receiving. So how would you know if Joe is pointing you right and Tom is steering you wrong?

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Except for the one infallible source of revelation, instruction, and direction, you really can't know for sure. But if you know Joe and if you know Tom you can allow your knowledge of them to guide your decision of whose advice to follow.

Some of life's questions are so hard that it is common to assume that no one really knows the answers. We accept that many of these questions on the larger matters of life can't even be known and certainly are far beyond our measly understanding. Why am I here? What is my purpose? Is there life after this life? Why should I do what is right? Does it really matter?

Other questions would likely arise out of these unanswered questions and be of equal or greater difficulty. If you're having to wrestle with questions of this nature, to whom do you go for answers? We accept that many of these questions on the larger matters of life can't even be known and certainly are far beyond our measly understanding. Why am I here? What is my purpose? Is there life after this life? Why should I do what is right? Does it really matter?

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Let me share something with you, my friend. There are answers to these obviously difficult questions and these answers *will* make sense to you. You might find that your worldview will need a little adjustment to better

enable your understanding but you'll be better for the adjustment. Let me explain what I mean by 'worldview'.

Have you ever seen how a teacher lays an answer stencil over a test being graded? The teacher just looks through the stencil and sees all the answers that were marked incorrectly. By seeing all the student's responses through the stencil, there is no need to rework the problems. All correct answers are immediately apparent by simply seeing them through the viewpoint of the stencil! Think of your worldview as if it were this stencil.

Some of life's questions seem impossible to answer but when viewed through the right stencil, virtually all questions become answerable.

Now that brings you to me, the writer of this work. You don't know me so why consider my advice? Well, it's just the advice of an old man. An old man who has learned a lot of lessons the hard way. I truly don't mind sharing freely with you what I've learned through costly trial and error. If only I'd known in my youth what I know now. What regrettable mistakes I could have avoided. Oh well. At least you don't have to stumble where I stumbled because you'll have my advice on the matter (if you choose to follow it).

I'd like to be able to tell you something that would make me sound like someone you might like to listen to. I have no degrees which would qualify me to give advice (well, with the exception of my professional specialty).

You'll just have to weigh the advice on its own merit. You can't judge the advice found in this book with the assistance of your knowledge of the writer because you don't know the writer. To trust advice, you should know something about the person giving it or the worldview giving birth to it.

Well, let me tell you all you need to know about me. I'm solidly oriented in reality. I understand people and their motivations but still retain a real appreciation for each one of them. I know that we all are navigating through this life in the best way that we can and that a little applied patience goes a long way. Now I've introduced myself to you. The man that I've become is actually still evolving. There is no one like me. And there is no one like you.

We are all made up of our unique experiences. So each of us is unique. Those little things that we've seen and heard have become part of us. We are a sum of what we've done and what we've wanted to do. Even twins aren't identical.

Each of us, with no exception, is tied inextricably to the little mundane events that make up our lives. Those everyday, unexceptional experiences slowly shape us into who we are. Those little confrontations with our reality help us get a bead on how things are and what's what. Our interactions with each other and the world around us mold and fashion us until we're entirely a product of what we've been through and what we've chosen to believe.

We are who we are and we cannot escape who we are. Nor can we escape what we are. Imperfect. Yes, I'm imperfect and I'm offering advice. Here's the catch... The advice isn't solely from my experience. I'm liberally and freely using that one reliable source of instruction and direction I mentioned earlier. I've found that this source is perfect for providing answers to difficult questions. It doesn't matter how difficult the question is, there is always a good answer and I think you'll agree that the answers make sense.