

A couple weeks ago we had two of our nieces stay with us for the weekend, one of whom is named Jenna, and she will be turning the lovely age of thirteen in a few months' time. Jenna is what you would call a...professional interrogator. She might as well start filling out her applications for law school, nevermind the fact that she hasn't even started her freshman year at Upper Sandusky High School. Nevertheless, in the few days' timespan Jenna was undeniably grilling me on how I was washing the dishes, how I ate blueberries, how long it took for me to pick out a movie that all of us could watch, and on and on and on. Yes, she may have her rather...let's call them, annoying moments; to say the least, but, nevertheless she is loved to the core, also, to say the least.

I bring our niece up, because Jenna immediately comes to mind when I hear the words from Ephesians: "We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming." Let's just say, Jenna does not operate that way whatsoever. Not to mention many of those in her age group are no-where near interested in going about their life with that mental mindset with regards to the world around them.

However, many of us Christians are under the impression when Jesus begs us to receive the very Kingdom of God like a child, we automatically assume that that is meant to be a blind-faith of sorts, just accepting everything as is: the Scripture, church tradition, our painting of God over the centuries to be the true authentic Gospel. So, do not ask the questions that will simply waste time; just...go along with it. Just accept all of it, and do not dare stir the church's pot, whether that be at the pot-lucks galore, or during any Bible study, or even in the post-game analysis in the car ride home after hearing the sermon from the know-it-all pastor. In other words, don't be like Jenna to truly receive the Kingdom of God.

Now, with all due respect to the many of us Christians who completely overlook the fact that nearly every child in the history of the entire world, including during Jesus' time, has absolutely refused to just go along with life because an adult says so, not to mention refuses to stop asking the dreaded "Why?" question nearly every day of their young life; it's safe to say we need to remember these words from Ephesians just as much as anything else: the reminder that children are, simply, not wired to just go along with any doctrine from centuries past, or just because a supposedly esteemed adult says so.

Granted, the writer of Ephesians has an ulterior motive. Obviously, Paul, or whomever wrote it in Paul's name, is under the impression *they* have the true doctrine down, they are not tricking anyone, they are not scheming the general public with this new Christianity thing. However, no matter how much we idolize certain sisters and brothers in Christ who have come through the church and shaped the rest of us for the better with their experienced wisdom and heart-felt living example for the rest of us to follow; even Paul himself had his...not-so-great moments, let's say.

And I'm not just talking about his mass-persecuting before he fell off his horse flat on his face after Jesus made a miraculous appearance out of nowhere. I'm talking about the countless opportunities Paul had when he wrote and preached about this immense freedom through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and yet, Paul wasn't exactly willing to carry that over to the entire human realm. We are free against sin and death through the Resurrection, yes, but Paul never went out of his way to advocate for complete freedom with regards to slavery, for instance. That would have proved to be immensely helpful centuries later, if he did. Nevertheless, many Christians just like us...just went along with it. Just accepted it as much of a

true doctrine of God as the preaching and teaching of Jesus Christ himself. We dare not stir the church's or society's almighty pot.

By now we realize we were far too hesitant to ask such questions about the esteemed Paul and his historical context. We did not want to upset the, supposedly, know-it-all and perfect church. We did not want to take the chance that all the saints who had gone before would somehow turn in an uproar in their hallow graves. We, quite simply, didn't want to be like Jenna. We were under the impression that in order to truly receive this Kingdom of God that God worked so hard in shaping, that we had better just go along with whatever was said, dare we mess up our chance to be fully embraced by the Kingdom meant for us.

Hopefully by now we also realize that we desperately need all the Jenna's as humanly possible, not just for the well-being of uncles and entire families and communities, but for the betterment of the church too, dare we mess with the Kingdom that is meant to shatter chains and annihilate the hate-filled evil that craves to creep into our life. We need the Jenna's to be brave and courageous enough to ask the questions the rest of us don't have the guts to do so. We need that level of accountability that the church went far too long without. But, just so we're clear: the Jenna's of the world are not here to tear

the church down and anything else we hold dear in this life. They are here through God's grace to bring to life other words we heard from Ephesians: "speaking the truth in love...grow[ing] up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the *whole body*, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."

The questions and the wonderings, the uncertainties and the all-around persistence of the Jenna's in all ages; it's not meant to tear the body apart, limb by limb, tradition by tradition, saint by saint. Instead, they are meant to build us up to heights we never knew possible, all the more into the very sacred heights of the Kingdom of God that, beyond our understanding, still desires to be part of the very depths of our life too. So, may the Jenna's of the world continue to blow us to and fro into very heart of the Gospel, into the sacrifice, into the mercy, into the boundless love of Jesus Christ himself. And for their holy persistence to heal and make new this body of Christ for the sake of the whole world, we give thanks to God indeed! Amen.