

Inappropriate to demean others for expressing their opinions

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As the Apostle Paul explained in his first letter to the Corinthians, when he was a child it was completely understandable when he acted immature. He was merely doing what was expected, given his juvenile nature.

In a very real sense, he simply did not know any better. When he grew into adulthood, however, he came to the realization – as should we all – that it was no longer acceptable to behave in the same childish ways.

Given the current political, cultural and religious landscape, I believe we could all stand to benefit from a re-examination of Paul's insight.

It really doesn't matter how angry you are or how desperate you think the situation has become, it is never appropriate to demean, degrade or debase another human being simply because you disagree with him or her – regardless of how passionate you are about the superiority of your personal point of view.

The only way we will ever be able to move forward as a society is to recognize and appreciate that civil discourse is the only legitimate course of action to pursue in any conflict.

Outrage and indignation never justifies treating those with whom you disagree in a disrespectful and humiliating manner. Part of what it means to be human is the ability to exercise self-control over your emotions.

Name-calling, heckling, mocking or taunting your adversaries is entirely explicable, and even considered somewhat normal, when you are in the third grade. Beyond the age of 8, however, those behaviors serve no useful purpose.

Look, I respect anyone who speaks his or her mind in a straightforward and unambiguous way. Honesty is the cornerstone of effective communication. But I am convinced this can be accomplished without questioning the inherent dignity of those who disagree with you.

Never forget the next generation is taking notes.

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