



DYLAN CLARK

# Those who humble themselves

**M**atthew 23:12 — “For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

After Father Dangelo gave a beautiful chapel speech about Matthew 23:12 Nov. 5, I was deeply moved. I found the verse not only inspiring, but also incredibly deep.

Later that day, I told one of my friends that Matthew 23:12 was my new favorite bible verse. He just looked at me. Then he said, “How can you like something from the Bible? I thought you can’t like anything good from it.”

**It’s time to stop associating atheism with hatred and evil. Any group of people—any community, any faith, and any demographic—is going to have good people and bad people.**

The thing is, I don’t believe in God. Too often in the past, and still to this day, some people always seem to confuse my lack of faith for my hating all that is good and beautiful in the world. “What keeps you from just killing people or stealing things?” “You’re probably going to end up being a jerk your whole life.” “How can you love your family if you don’t love God first?” One classmate told me in ninth grade, with a smile on his face, “You know you’re going to burn in hell for eternity, right?” It’s time to stop associating atheism with hatred and evil. Any group of people—any community,

any faith, and any demographic—is going to have good people and bad people. It will have smart people and dumb people. It will have people who are open-minded and those who despise anything or anyone different in any way. This has been a trend throughout history.

People seem to think that because I’m atheist I despise religion. I have a secret: I love it.

Religion has been arguably the most important galvanizing force in history. It has unified masses and helped them achieve incredible things. It is a source of love and healing.

I truly believe that without the unifying effect of humanity’s love for God(s) throughout history, we would be nowhere close to where we are in 2013.

But I’ve thought about religion and God and have determined for myself that, for various reasons, I don’t believe. I do not profess to know all of the answers, and I’m comfortable with never knowing.

Many of my friends identify as non-believers as well. Look at the numbers we gathered in this chapel poll—19 percent of the Upper School student body doesn’t believe in God. I would go out on a limb and say that 19 percent of this amazing community is in no way condemned to “burn in hell for eternity.”

I’m not here to explain why I don’t believe in God or to tell others to follow my path, as I believe

that everyone’s faith should be his own decision. All I’m asking is for you to critically think about what you believe and to remain open to what others believe.

In reading answers to the ‘Why?’ question from, “Are you more/equally/less religious than your parents? Why?” on the surveys we handed out in chapel last month, I was shocked.

Yes, there were many well-thought-out answers for each of the three options. But some were not so:

“Why not?”

“I don’t know.”

“Everyone else is.”

Please don’t be one of these people. Know why you believe what you do.

If you examine your faith and find that you truly believe you identify with the Christian tradition or Muslim tradition or fill-in-the-blank tradition, stay strong in your faith.

If you find that you doubt God or come up with a system of beliefs unique to yourself, don’t be afraid to say so.

Whatever you do, embrace what you do—or don’t—believe, and respect what others believe. Especially when it’s different from what you do.

For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

## Religious leaders see a generational issue

By **Alexander Munoz**  
special projects editor

**W**hen he decided that he wanted to pursue a career in religion, Father Joel Prather looked forward to showing newcomers his religion through his eyes.

But when he got behind the altar to deliver his first sermon and scanned the congregation, he noticed that most faces were elderly.

Prather wanted to have the opportunity to show youth his interpretation of Christianity at his church, the Episcopal Church of the Savior, but the audience was simply lacking.



**Pandit Sri Kanna Balsubramanian**  
Religious leaders see a deep-rooted issue with the millennial generation and its decreasing level of religious involvement.

“I’ve definitely noticed a lack of youth in my congregations,” Prather said. “Millennials have dropped right off of the map in terms of spiritual interest and vigor.”

The Millennial Generation, also known as Generation Y, is the generation with birth years starting in the early 1980s. A 2012 study conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that religion’s influence is weakening for the generation.

“I think youth is becoming detached from the fundamental structure of religion, which includes things like weekly church attendance, repeated prayer, and overall reverence in daily life,” Prather said.

Prather argues that while the cause of the decreasing spirituality in youth is unclear, its effect can only be negative for both the young people and the society.

“Religion is not only an ease of mind and freedom from stress—it is also a tool. A tool to moderate radical behavior and ensure psychological stability,” Prather said. “Without such a tool, society loses a cornerstone of its paradigm.”

David Stern, a Senior Rabbi at Temple Emanu-El, has also noticed a decrease in the temple’s youth attendance since he joined the temple in 1989.

He agrees with Prather about the dangerous nature of the decreasing spirituality among America’s youth.

“Our society is like a house,” Stern said. “Science, politics, medicine, and business form the walls and boards of the house; they hold everything together. But religion is the roof of the house. It seals everything up and protects it.”

Stern argues that without the “roof” of religion, society will not be able to trust the stability of the rest of society’s “house.”

“And even more than just being necessary for society to trust its neighbors, religion adds an element of faith to the culture,” Stern said. “Everyone needs to have faith in something. Faith provides a unique passivity of mind that simply cannot be achieved through other means.”

With all the benefits of faith, Stern believes that Millennials would be more attracted to religion if they gave faith a sincere try.

“I think the biggest problem in terms of the spirituality of this generation is the lack of exposure,” Stern said. “Because young boys and girls have had less exposure, they are less interested in religion and less likely to attend a religious service.”

**A**lthough Stern thinks that increasing Millennials’ exposure to religion will increase spirituality, Pandit Sri Kannan Balsubramanian of the Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple disagrees, arguing that the problem is less superficial.

“With the Internet and so much new technology, this generation has more access to information than any generation before,” Balsubramanian said. “This knowledge and repulsion from religion are deep-rooted and will be hard to reverse.”

Although Balsubramanian hasn’t noticed as significant of a drop in youth attendance to religious services as Prather and Stern, he has still noticed an overall decrease in Millennial spirituality.

“When people see and read information, they think it’s the whole truth,” Balsubramanian said. “Well, knowledge is great, but that information may not be 100% correct. Even in science there is room for error. Nothing is certain. Even science requires faith.”

Balsubramanian claims that many aspects of life require faith, not only religion.

Religious services, however, are the best place to hone the skills of faith for other aspects of life.

“When you think of a temple service, don’t think of religion, don’t think of science, don’t think of what’s truth and what’s not, because that’s the most important part of any religion,” Balsubramanian said.

Balsubramanian argues that access to information has caused many to lose sight of the underlying purpose of religion—the self-improvement that he believes comes from a relationship with God.

“Ultimately, religion is about you, God, and how you can become more like God,” Balsubramanian said.

## MARKSMEN AND RELIGION

exploring what we believe

**33%** of Upper Schoolers identify as neither religious nor spiritual

**23%** identify as **ATHEIST OR AGNOSTIC**

**56%** identify as Christian

**19%** do not believe in God

**1/4** of Upper Schoolers pray alone daily

**7%** consider religion their highest priority

**50** percent see themselves as less religious than their parents

**1** out of **6** Upper Schoolers considers religion nonexistent in his life

**33%** attend religious services weekly

**44%** see chapel as helpful, while **55%** see it as neither helpful nor hurtful

**24%** identify as **SPIRITUAL** rather than as religious